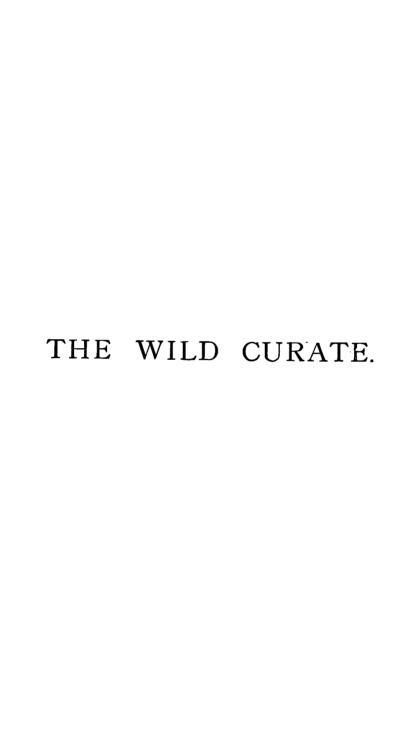
THE WILD CURATE

BY

J Mc Gricor Allan 📻



THE WILD CURATE.

A Movel.

J. McGRIGOR ALLAN.

Author of

"THE COST OF A CORONET," "NOBLY FALSE," "THE LAST DAYS OF A BACHELOR," FATHER STIRLING," "TRUE AND FRIGNED LOVE,"
"YOUNG LADYISM," &c., &c.

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments. Love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds. Or bends with the remover to remove:

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come: Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom." -SHAKESPFARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE WILD CURATE.

BOOK FIRST.

THE CURATE NOT IN SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

RECTOR AND CURATE; OR, THE OLD AND THE NEW SCHOOL.

The time was seventeen years since. Scene, the Rectory at Laxington. Characters, an old and a young gentleman, sitting over their dessert. Rev. Mr. Headlong, Rector, drank port, to which he was evidently used. Rev. Mr. Weatherall, Curate, drank claret, and looked unused to drinking wine at all. This indeed, was the case. Too poor to afford it, and not in Society, he rarely tasted wine, except at the Rector's table. The Rector was a tall, portly man of sixty, evidently a bon vivant; a good liver in the material sense of eating and drinking. He had once been handsome; but a long course of indulgence in appetite, and unchecked vol. I.

authority, caused the animal to predominate the intellectual, and gave his features a sinister expression. The Curate—a complete contrast—was of medium size, spare, active, perfectly well-made, though too worn and thin, for manly beauty. Romantic young ladies thought his head a fine study for an anchorite. The well-developed brow showed intellect; the features were regular and pleasing, and their somewhat melancholy expression gave additional value to his smile. Some lady admirers thought he had only one Some lady admirers thought he had only one fault. He was a bachelor, and seemed in no great hurry to change his condition. The Rectoress had retired to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to their wine, walnuts, and a very animated discussion. The manner in which the Rector drank a glass of wine, offered a study to a painter. The reverend gentleman managed to gratify three senses—sight, smell and taste. He raised the full glass between him and the window, admiring the beautiful ruby tint. Then he placed the goblet under his nose, so as to inhale the full fragrance of the bouquet. Then he drank the contents slowly, so that his palate might retain as long as possible the exquisite retain as long as possible, the exquisite flavour. Lastly, he gave a sigh of content and satisfaction. While witnessing this performance, the Curate could not resist saying:

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last, it

biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

With an indignant glance, half real, half comic, the Rector replied:

"Croaker! you are as bad as the death's head at an Egyptian banquet. You need not have reminded me of my gout."

"I really did not intend to do so, sir; but if you suffer from gout, why do you not drink some other wine than *port*, which I understand, is the very worst for that complaint. This claret, for example, is very palatable."

"You may well say so," said the Rector, taking no pains to conceal his contempt for his guest's ignorance in wine. "That wine which you call very palatable, stands me in ten shillings a bottle."

"Dear me," said the Curate, "it seems a

sin to drink such high-priced wine."

"What would you do with it? Save it for the poor, I suppose. Give it to old paupers, who couldn't appreciate it, and wouldn't thank you for it, and who would prefer beer or gin. Faugh! the beastly liquor. The very smell of it makes me sick. Yesterday, one of the stable men stank of gin so, that I dismissed him on the spot."

"And yet, sir, it seems to me, that, considering our Lord's words, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me,' no wine can be too good for the old and sick poor."

"Bother your cant! You might as well

cast pearls before swine, as give such wine to people with uneducated palates, who really prefer a common article. Thank you for your advice, but I am too old now to fancy claret, and good sound port like this never hurt anyone."

"Well, sir, you know best, but the Faculty,

I know, condemn port for gouty subjects."

"And drink it themselves! Port is only bad for the gout, if drunk in excess. Now, I am a moderate drinker, and my gout is hereditary. I should have had the gout, if I never touched port. So that settles the matter. Don't spare the claret, and I'll not spare the port. My maxim is, always empty the bottle. Wine should never be left. It tempts servants. Either they drink it, which is sinful, or they leave it, and then——"

"You have it for next day," said the

Curate innocently.

"Those who like it next day, are welcome to drink it. I would not give a thank-you for it. The man who offers me stale wine, insults me. Wine should always be drunk as soon as the bottle is opened."

"Well, now, that never occurred to me

before," said the Curate.

"Now, with regard to that fancy of yours, for preaching against the so-called cruelty of Field-sports, all I can say is, I wouldn't if I were you."

The Curate replied drily:

"It strikes me, that if you were I, you

would, and must, act, precisely as I should, or shall. But we need not assume a propo-

sition involving an impossibility."

"Oh! spare me your metapheesics-after dinner. Apropos, just coach me up in that capital Scotch definition of Metaphysics. shall be dining with the Earl soon, and even an old bon mot may serve. My memory is not so good as it was."

"When the person wha is spoken to, dinna ken what the person wha speaks means, and when the person wha speaks, dinna ken what he means himsel, that's metapheesics!"

"Capital! The Scotch gives it point. I hope $\vec{\mathbf{I}}$ 'll remember it next time $\hat{\mathbf{I}}$ dine at

Laxington House."

"Pop it down in your commonplacebook."

"Haven't got one."

"Dear me, that's strange, I think all

clergymen-

"Too much trouble," said the Rector, unceremoniously interrupting. "Who's the author of that definition of Metaphysics?"

"I can't recollect, but if I had access to your splendid library, I should be able to

hunt it up."

"No doubt you could. I should be puzzled where to look for it. Reading's a bore. You

know I've long given it up."

This statement of a literal fact, the Rector was not ashamed to make, in mixed company, as though it was something of which to be

proud! He made the announcement pompously, as though intending to convey the idea, that he had no need to add to his immense acquired stock of learning, and experience of human nature, whatever ordinary people might do. Here, the Rector resembled Lord Foppington, who could not submit to the frightful drudgery of seeking entertainment, in the forced product of another man's brain! But the Rector's intimates knew he had no time for reading. He had his wife and family to look after. He had to speculate more or less. For though he had got a fortune with his wife, his living was worth only £900. A fashionable Rector could not be expected to make both ends meet on such a bagatelle. And pluralists are now expected to be clever. Then the Rector must have his amusements; shooting and hunting in autumn and winter. Then he must look after his precious health, and visit London, or the Continent, for change of air in the season. Any spare time he devoted most conscientiously to his parochial duties. But this requires some explanatiou. His idea of devotion to clerical duty was—Hospitality not in the old-fashioned, ante-reform, corrupt sense of our Catholic ancestors, of relieving the poor, but in the new, sound, practical, orthodox, reformed, Protestant sense, of feasting with the noble and rich! Not that, like some clergymen, Mr. Headlong "spunged" on his rich parishioners. To

do him justice, he reciprocated hospitality; entertained his entertainers; lived up to, and far beyond his income. He lived like a far beyond his income. He lived like a fighting-cock, and called, and thought himself, a poor man! He borrowed, ran in debt, and seemed quite unconscious that on an income of £1,350 to spend £2,000 was dishonourable, unclerical, unchristian! Any intimation that he should retrench, pay his debts, and visit his poor parishioners, he resented as a Dissenting and unreasonable cavil, and parried like a skilful Protestant Jesuit. It was the Curate's business to visit the poor. It was the Rector's business to guard the morals of the upper ranks. How could he better discharge his duty as a Christian pastor, than by feasting, and being feasted, by "miserable sinners," among the aristocracy and gentry? Such was the Rector's idea of the proper division of labour.

"Besides," continued the Rector, "I don't keep a dog and bark myself. What's the use of a curate, if I am to pore over dusty volumes? You are my walking dictionary, lexicon, and Cyclopædia. But to return to our discussion. You know what I mean. Were I in your place, as your ecclesiastical superior and friend, I strongly urge you not to preach against Cruelty to Animals. Or, if you do, deal with the subject generally. Do not allude to field-sports."

"Why so, pray?"

"Can you ask?"

"You don't object from personal motives?"

- "Certainly not. My hunting days are over. I'm too heavy to follow the hounds now." The Rector sighed, and added: "True, I occasionally attend the meets." (He never lost an opportunity.) "But as I am no longer a hunting parson, I can have no personal interest to serve. But this is a hunting county. The Earl is M.F.H., his daughter a Di Vernon, and—and—don't you see?"
- "You adduce the very strongest reasons why I should preach against hunting."

"Good God, sir! What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. Attack a sin at its head quarters."

"What! would you really preach against hunting, in presence of the Earl of Laxington?"

"Certainly. I would rather preach against hunting in his presence, than in his absence."

"Then you will be preaching against the Lord of the Manor."

"And patron of the living. Why not? Why should I study his feelings? He is not my Master."

"Do you mean to say he is mine?" inter-

rupted the Rector furiously.

"I do not insinuate such a thing. I mean simply to remind you that a clergyman's master is Christ!"

"Oh, that of course. I thought you meant

that, as his lordship gave me the living, I was under undue influence. Well, don't you see, if you attack the sports of the aristocracy and gentry—all hunting men and game preservers—you make yourself unpopular, and do no good."

"I admit the first proposition, not the second. I will make myself unpopular, in the hope of doing some good. At least, I shall be able to say 'Liberavi animam meam.' After preaching against field-sports, I, at least, will not be amenable to the reproach continually hurled against the clergy, that we are afraid to attack cruelty, when practised by the wealthy and the great! On this great question it is too true that the clergy dare not speak out. How applicable is the prophet's denunciation: 'His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.'"

"Oh, if you come that high and mighty style, I have done," cried the Rector, in a tone of disgust. He poured out a bumper, and drank it off at a gulp.

"But where would our Religion be, if the Apostles and Primitive Christians had feared

unpopularity?"

"Sink the shop! no cant! No preaching out of church! Keep your texts and Scriptural allusions for your precious sermon, if you are mad enough to preach it. Let us either drop the subject, or else discuss it like

practical men of the world, as we both are!" The Curate did not perceive the irony. He was not a man of the world. The

reverend worldling continued:

"Consider well. The upper classes feel strongly on this subject of Sport. Preach against hunting and other field-sports—you make enemies of them, you set class against class, you divide the parish, and encourage Radicals, Levellers, Republicans, Socialists, Communists, Revolutionists, and all other Dissenters."

"I respect the powers that be---"

"I know you do; but, if you had time to read the papers——"

"Which I really have not," interpolated the Curate.

"You would know how the Radical journals rave against the Game Laws. Now, if you attack hunting, you must attack coursing, shooting, angling. They all hang together. If one is cruel, all are. Abolish game laws-in a short time, you will not have a head of game in the country. Think of a winter in the country, without hunting! The nobility and gentry will have no inducement to reside on their estates. It would be precious dull, and a bad thing for the poor, the shopkeepers, and all classes! Abolish field-sports, and immense sums now spent in rural districts (during winter, when the poor most suffer) will be lavished in towns, and perhaps on the Continent."

"It might be replied, that the sooner the nobility and gentry cultivate a taste for innocent amusements, the better for themselves and others. An idle school-boy might truly plead that he found the country very dull, unless permitted to spin cockchafers, pelt frogs and birds with stones; make war, and inflict pain on numerous living creatures! Public opinion is undergoing a vast change---

"I know it," growled the Rector. "Blast public opinion!"

"It may be some time before we expect landed proprietors to be useful, as well as ornamental, and to produce anything. But, the days are nearly numbered, in which they can with impunity, be actively mischievous, kill their time, and set a bad example, by torturing and murdering animals—their fellow creatures—for sport."

"One would think you had been reading one of those low Radical papers."

"I mix with the poor and hear their complaints, some of which are very reasonable."

"That's all very well. But when you are a beneficed clergyman, you will mix with the upper classes. Now, you know, allied to several noble families as I am, both by my own, and my wife's pedigree, and with our position in society, it is extremely natural I should enter into their views."

"Far be it from me to judge any man's

"Far be it from me to judge any man's conscience—I am neither Aristocrat nor

Democrat. I look at the question impartially, and must do my duty as a Christian minister."

"Oh, if you come to that, you should let the question alone."

"How so, pray?"

"Like the rest of the clergy. Who ever heard of a clergyman preaching against Cruelty to Animals?"

"Who, indeed? That's just what I complain of. How shall we reform the world, if we do not begin at the right end—the top, instead of the bottom, of the social pyramid? Cruelty in princes, peers, and priests, is a greater sin than in peasants. The upper classes, by field-sports and Epicurism, teach cruelty directly, by precept and example. 'Ye are the makers of manners.'"

"Well, it's no use preaching at me. I say it is not a subject for the pulpit."
"That's just what I cannot admit. We are a cruel people. I find cruelty to animals everywhere. I cannot condemn cruelty in the peasant, and connive at cruelty in the Peer and the Priest. I have been asked, in derision, why I don't attack the rich and the great first? And I think it my duty to do so."

"I suppose you think it very wicked in clergymen to participate in field-sports?"
"I certainly do."

"There is no more cruelty in a clergyman hunting than in anyone else."

"No more cruelty certainly, but far more impropriety."

"And I suppose you will attack sporting clergy, as well as the laity?"

"Most undoubtedly."

"What, sir! would you dare to degrade the clergy, by holding them up to the con-tempt of the laity?"

"Sporting parsons degrade themselves. I cannot make sporting parsons more contemptible than they now are. It is they who have caused Dissent, Infidelity, Atheism, and perhaps sealed the fate of the Establishment. If we would avert the coming crash, we must hunt them out of the Church."

"Vastly fine, upon my word!" sneered the Rector, "but more suited to the conventicle, than to the church. I pardon your person-

ality——"

"Personality! I never——"

"Oh! of course you forgot that, though no longer a hunting parson, I still fish and shoot. To that extent, I am still a sporting parson, and amenable to your tirade."
"If I have offended, I ask pardon."

"Granted! This comes of one-sided views. When you go into Society, when you rise in your profession—but you never will rise, if you don't conquer this mania for speaking out. I'm sick of this cant about telling the truth—the excuse of every brutal boor for insulting his superiors. The truth indeed! Who wants to hear the truth? Why, Society

could not exist for a week, if everyone spoke the truth."

"Then, sir, I really cannot regret that I am not in Society."

"You think that very clever now! But allow me to tell you that you are in Society, while you dine at the Rectory. That, sir, is a privilege, which, if turned to account, is calculated to secure you a welcome in the best houses."

best houses."

The Curate might have objected that, so long as he was never asked to meet any of the Leaders of Society, the privilege really did not extend beyond the honour of the invitation, the pleasure of being patronised by the Rector and Rectoress, and the material enjoyments of a good dinner, and excellent wine. But with the good breeding of a real Christian, he bowed, and was silent.

"Fill your glass, Weatherall," continued the Rector, setting the example. "I am sorry for you, for you are a good fellow. You have been with me three years. We get on well together. You are popular among the poor, and you may be popular with all classes, if you choose. But you must get rid of these crotchets about reforming the world.

of these crotchets about reforming the world. I tell you plainly that if you carry out this Quixotic idea of running a muck against people's hobbies, you will only ruin yourself. Why will you become a martyr?"

"That is too holy a word for a little local unpopularity. My life will be in no danger.

The aristocracy and gentry will never invite me to their houses. They may say hard things about me. But they will never condescend directly to persecute me."

"You don't understand. Of course you run no risk of personal injury to life or limb. But you will be a marked man. You will

never get preferment."

"I am not a preferment hunter."

"Oh, no; of course not! None of us are! You don't mean to insinuate that I am?" sneered the Rector.

"Really sir, you put wrong constructions

on my words."

"Well, well, listen! You will make the place too hot to hold you. The Earl will never tolerate a curate who preaches at him, inveighs against his favourite sports, and all

the sporting gentry will back him up."

"The Earl not tolerate! But what can the Earl do? I am not his Curate. He cannot inflict ecclesiastical penalties. And as to the bishop—all the bishops are opposed to hunting parsons. Therefore I co-operate with my bishop."

The Rector blushed, as he said:

"No; but you know the living is in the Earl's gift."

"And he gave it to you. He cannot take it from you."

"True; but gratitude requires that I should not keep a curate, who preaches against my patron's favourite sport. The Earl and I, you know, are intimate. He would naturally expect me to side with him. In short, you would make it unpleasant; cause a coolness, or a quarrel between us, if I sided with you."

"Do I understand you to mean——?"

began the curate.

"Why, in plain words, if you offend the Earl, by preaching against field-sports, he will naturally expect me to provide myself with another curate——"

"And if you refuse to dismiss me for preaching according to my conscience?"
"Why, the Earl will cease to be my friend. That, you know, would be a serious thing in the country. But, independently of personal feelings, to be on bad terms with the Earl would certainly weaken my influence in the parish, and thus injure the cause of religion, and—and——"

"Pray proceed, sir. Let me thoroughly understand the position."

understand the position."

"Well then, though the Earl cannot deprive me of the living, he can hinder it from going to my son at my death. It's true, I am only sixty, and come of a long-lived race. My grandfather lived to eighty, and my father would probably have lived as long, if he had not broken his neck, while hunting, at sixty-five! The living has been in our family for three generations. It's a kind of heirloom. And the Earl told me—in strict confidence,

mind—that if he should outlive me, the living shall go to my son, provided that Harry qualifies, which of course he will do. For, though now averse to taking Holy Orders, he is his father's son, and will not permit his scruples to stand in the way of £900 a year. Now, you perceive the beauty of this arrangement, by which a living is kept in one family, and descends from father to son. It is classical, patriarchal, scriptural, regal. It is an inducement for the clergy to marry, and bring up their children in the fear of God, and as candidates for the family living. It is an inducement for clever young men to enter the Church, to know that, instead of pining on beggarly curacies, they will be provided for at once with good benefices. Lastly it is an excellent thing for the parish."

"How, pray?"

"Don't you see it removes the popular Dissenting objection, that congregations are made over like flocks of sheep, to pastors

of whom they know nothing."

"How so? If livings descend from father to son, the parishioners have no voice or control in the appointment."

"No, of course not, but they are not made over to entire strangers. In this case, the parishioners know me, and know my son. Naturally, they prefer the son of their old pastor to a perfect stranger."

The Curate could not trust himself to speak,

or he might have said, "Yes, they know you as a Pastor who shirks every duty, but that of shearing his flock. They know your son as one of the wildest young scamps at Oxford; as one reported to be an avowed Infidel, if not quite an Atheist!" There are occasions when we must be silent, and dissemble, or else illustrate Talleyrand's precept, "Language is given us to conceal our thoughts."

The Rector was too engressed in unfolding

The Rector was too engrossed in unfolding his own selfish scheme of family aggrandisement, to note the look of disgust which the Curate could not conceal. The hackneyed conscience of the elder clergyman, saw only laudable worldly wisdom, and paternal affection, in what appeared to the other, the most glaring piece of Simony! At length the Curate said:

"I understand. If I preach this sermon against Field Sports, the Earl will order you to dismiss me, and you will comply, for fear your son may lose the reversion of the living?"

"You put it rather plainly," said the Rector, a little out of countenance. "The Earl cannot order me to dismiss you, but——"

Earl cannot order me to dismiss you, but——"
"He can intimate it, or at any rate, you will fulfil his wishes, whether he orders you or not, if my sermon offend him, which it must, and will?"

"My dear Weatherall, I'm afraid I must do so. Personally, I don't mind the Earl's displeasure, a rush. I could snap my fingers, as I did at the Bishop, when he presumed to interfere with my hunting. But I can't afford to let the living go out of the family. I've nothing to leave my boy, but the reversion of the living. So you see, I dare not offend the patron."

"So if I preach against Field Sports, I must

go?"

"Yes; but it will grieve me to part with you. I like you, I want to keep you. It's your own fault if you are obliged to leave. Why will you be so very independent? Your highly respectable mother too, likes the place. I hoped you would marry and settle here. And now you quarrel with your bread-and-butter, and throw up a good appointment, all to gratify a foolish fad——"

"Judge not, that ye be not judged!" said

the Curate, sternly.

"Oh, if you get to quoting Scripture, there's no more to be said."

"Mr. Headlong, if I do not judge you, you have no right to judge me."

"Well, but consider, it's like flying in the face of Providence."

"Sir, my conscience is my own."

"Well, well; but think over the matter. Do nothing rashly. I am satisfied with you, I trust you are so with me. Good curacies are not so easily found. Why go forth and begin the world anew?"

The Curate replied sadly:

"I might ask, why will you send me forth?

But I refrain from criticising your motives. Leave me to the dictates of my conscience. I will not decide rashly. But if, after meditation and prayer, my resolution remains unchanged, I may surely conclude that I have a mission to preach against Cruelty to Animals."

Nettled at not getting his own way, the Rector broke out vehemently:

"I knew it; I said so. I hate giving you advice, because you never take it."

"I thank you sincerely for your advice, and good opinion. I would comply, if I could. Do you think it a pleasure in me to leave Laxington, my poor, my schools, my humble friends, to go among strangers?"

"Then why go?"

"'Tis you who will send me away."

"Granted. But why act so as to bring about a rupture? You are young. You may be wrong. Do be advised."

"In a matter of conscience, I must act

independently."

- "Bother your conscience! Look here, Weatherall, when I see how obstinate you are---
 - "Firm!" said the Curate.
- "No; obstinate is the word. I begin to think I am mistaken in you, after all."

" How?"

"You are not the straightforward, candid person we all thought you. You are playing some deep game."

Too excited to notice the look of genuine

wonder on the Curate's face, the Rector added:

"I can guess your motive."

"Oblige me by stating what you believe it to be."

"You are ambitious. You curry favour with the people. You were seen talking with that Dissenting hypocrite, Gnatstrainer, the other day. I see through you. You want to make your mark, and jump into a good appointment at once, instead of obtaining preferment in the regular way. You know you can preach. You have determined to risk local unpopularity, for the sake of singularity. You will appeal to the Rads, to the benevolent, to Exeter Hall, to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; to all those canting humbugs, who pretend to be better than their neighbours, and who are always setting people by the ears. If you can't get on in the Establishment, you will go over to the Dissenters, perhaps turn Ritualist, or Romanist; sell yourself to the highest bidder; some Society will take you up. You covet martyrdom. You will have your reward. You pretend sympathy for animals, while thinking only of Number One!"

It was characteristic of Mr. Weatherall's Christian disposition, that the Rector's rudeness did not cause him to lose his temper. Perhaps the Curate was used to being snubbed by the Rector. The Curate only said:

"Indeed, sir, you do me injustice. Time

will show whether I am actuated by worthy or unworthy motives."

Here a footman entered, and said:

"Missus's compliments, sir, and will you please to 'ave kauffee in the dinin'-room, or come up to the drorin'-room to tea?"

"Tell your mistress, we are coming."

The man departed.

"No more wine, I suppose, Weatherall?"
"No; thank you."

The Rector felt he had gone too far, but he never apologised to anyone whom he considered his social inferior; never to a layman, unless a man of rank or fortune. Nevertheless he tried, by his manner, to conciliate the Curate.

"Don't mind my plain speaking, Weatherall. It springs out of my regard for you. Shall we join Mrs. Headlong? Apropos, did I ever show you Mrs. Headlong's pedigree? It's all but Royal, you know."

Some men smarting under so gross an insult, would have been tempted to quote Pope's couplet:

"What can ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards? Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

The Curate had seen the pedigree a dozen times, but he was too polite to say so; thus proving the Rector's axiom, that truth should not be spoken at all times, and that the most sincere of men in Society, if he does not tell "white lies," must at least dissemble, and

compromise with truth! He merely bowed, and said he should be pleased to see it. So they went up-stairs to the drawing-room, where the Rectoress (still a fine woman at fifty) presided over the tea-table, like a Juno in her second youth!



CHAPTER II.

A MODEL CURATE: MR. GNATSTRAINER'S GOOD WORK.

Although the Curate was not in Society, yet he was very popular with the poor. It may be said of him, as of his Divine Master—"the common people heard him gladly." In this and other respects, the Rector and Curate were complete foils, and contrasts to each Wicked, worldly people (lumped together by the Rector as Dissenters) said that Mr. Headlong had very good cause to dread the alternative of quarrelling with his patron, the Earl, or dismissing the Curate. For Rev. Mr. Weatherall was, "out-and-out," the best Curate ever known, in the memory of man, in Laxington. A real hard-working preacher of the Gospel, not a mere scented, kid-gloved, mincing croquet-player. To be sure, the poor man was killing himself, and, if he did not get rest and relaxation soon, would work himself into a consumption! These censorious critics did not appreciate the Rector's idea of division of labour. said he put all the dangerous and laborious duty upon the poor Curate, while he attended only to the ornamental department! Another

resemblance to Lord Foppington, who when reminded that, as a peer, he was a pillar of the state, replied: "Faith! only an ornamental pillar then!" These unreasonable Dissenters further said: "It was a shame, that the Curate, who did all the work, should have only £150, while the fat lazy Rector enjoyed £750! The man who did all the parish work, got only one-sixth of the income of him who did nothing! Rector and Curate should change places!"

Churchmen who believed in, or pretended to believe in, the Rector, retorted that he did do something! He preached generally once every Sunday, and very good sermons too! Here Dissenters became positively libellous. They asserted that the Rector bought the sermons which he read! That it was wellknown the Rector, a sporting parson (like his father and grandfather), was as incapable of composing a sermon, as of preaching extempore; whereas the Curate excelled in both kinds of pulpit oratory. The Rector's defenders asked why he should be incapable of writing the garmana which he delivered as of writing the sermons which he delivered so fluently? People in the gallery, vouched for seeing the MS. Were these people liars? Dissenters replied, "No," but they were deceived. What they took to be MS. sermons, were in reality sermons in lithograph, imitating hand-writing, to deceive such observers into the belief that the preacher composed his sermons, and that the writing was very plain, lest any halting of the reverend reader, should betray his want of acquaintance with the manuscript. They further adduced the fact that the Rector (excited to emulate his Curate) had once tried to preach extempore; had broken down helplessly, and pretended sudden illness, to cover his confusion! On another occasion, he had attempted original composition, as it seemed for the first time in his life. He had read a real MS. sermon, which was undoubtedly his own, because it was utterly silly, and even full of grammatical errors, The sermons that he bought, were admitted to be good, but spoilt in the delivery, being declaimed in a pompous manner, without feeling; an additional, but superfluous proof that he never composed them, and did not indeed understand them! How different from the Curate, who, whether he preached extempore, or from MS., felt what he delivered, and so made his hearers feel, and sent every word home to their hearts!

The Rector's defenders took refuge in the fact that he had a magnificent library. Dissenters laughed scornfully and replied, "much good that does him, his books might all be dummies, for all he knows of 'em. "He spends two hours in his library daily," said his friends. "Yes," said his enemies. "He retires there daily after dinner, to sleep off the fumes of his bottle of port, like a gorged boa-constrictor." This reply exhibited a confusion of metaphor, or a singular know-

ledge of the boa-constrictor's drinking habits, calculated to astonish Zoologists. Some Churchmen denied that the Rector bought his sermons. Others admitted, and justified the fact. If a man had not time, or ability, to write sermons, what was he to do? "Make way for those who had both," said Dissenters.
"Men who could not preach, had no moral right to take splendid pay for what they could not do. It was a piece of gross dishonesty, far worse than theft and lying. Such men should never have been ordained, or have obtained curacies, far less fat benefices. If by accident, such impostors had gained entrance into the ministry, they ought to be cashiered, or drummed out of the Church Militant to the tune of the 'Rogues' March, and their livings given to honest and qualified men, now starving in obscurity. The existence of such a cancer, in the falsely-called *National* Church—preachers who could not preach, dumb dogs, pastors who sheared the sheep without feeding or guarding them; justified not merely Dissent, but the only radical cure—Disestablishment and Disendowment."

"But if the Rector cannot preach, is it not better for his parishioners, that he should read the sermons of other men?" "Undoubtedly," was the reply, "and if he did so openly, we would thank him for reading good sermons, rather than preaching bad ones." "Well, that is just what Mr. Headlong does. He knows where to purchase." Dissenters replied: "Then let him honestly and openly take a volume of South, Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, or Tillotson, into the pulpit; let him make some use of his library, which he only keeps for show; imitate the sensible conduct of Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain, and tell us what Divine is going to preach, instead of attempting to get credit for what he cannot perform. Every time he reads a lithographed sermon, he passes it off as his own, and is thus guilty of a mean, disgraceful, and sacrilegious deception. It is impossible to respect such a man. Yet he forsooth pretends to despise Dissenters. Humbugs like Mr. Headlong caused the invention of the trade in written or lithographed sermons."

Readers who think this picture a caricature, are referred to an article—"The Sermon Trade," St. Paul's Magazine, February 1869.

The Curate was a good preacher, and something more. He practised what he preached. Saint Luther, the Father of Protestantism, who excluded from his translation, St. James' so-called "Epistle of Straw," would have disowned the Curate. For he illustrated both in life and doctrine, the Apostolic definition of "pure religion." "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Though young and celibate, his reputation was untainted by the breath of scandal.

Good Dissenters, who preached up Salvation by Faith alone, and did good works on the sly, as though ashamed of them, met the Curate by the bed-side of the sick poor, and pardoned him for believing in the necessity of works. The Rector ignored all Catholics and Dissenters. The Curate was personally acquainted with men and women of all creeds. Persons disunited by theology, were brought together by good works. God alone knows what a man believes. What he actually does, is more or less apparent. The vilest hypocrite may go to church or chapel. Enquire of his neighbours if you want to learn a man's character. Does he pay his debts? Is he a good husband and a father; kind, benevolent, charitable? After all, the test is conduct. In his charitable visits, the Curate often met good Catholic women, of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul. The Curate knew how well they merited their founder's description: "Your title will be Sisters of Charity, servants of the sick poor. Oh, beautiful name! beautiful employment! Oh, my daughters! what have you done for God, to merit the glorious title, Servants of the Poor? It is as if we said Servants of Jesus Christ, because He reckons as done to Himself all that is done for His members. The streets of the city, or the houses of the sick, shall be your cloister; hired rooms shall be your cells; your chapel shall be the parish church; obedience shall be your solitude; the fear of

God your grating; and a strict and holy modesty your only veil." There are Sisterhoods in the Church of England far less Protestant, than the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. These worthy women prayed for the good "heretic," Mr. Weatherall. Thus it is, when we obey our Saviour's commands to succour the poor, we forget to hate one another because we worship Him differently. Good Christians of both communions, and all denominations, cannot help uniting in good works. We stretch out our hands to one another. We meet at the foot of the Cross.

The Teetotallers, having quite given up the Rector, were highly indignant with the Curate for continuing a moderate drinker. He would not preach their new gospel of total abstinence, which they seemed to think exempted them from any other. At several houses where the Curate called, when touching on religion, he was snubbed by the self-sufficient reply—"We are teetotallers here." He found it utterly useless to reason with those fanatics, or to hint that a teetotaller might be (and often was) a cold, calculating, self-righteous Pharisee. The Curate never preached, or recommended total abstinence, except in extreme cases, where he knew it to be the only effectual remedy. He refused to run at all publicans, like a mad bull at a red rag, or sniff at, and try to ruin them. On the contrary, he tried to enlist them, and often successfully, in the cause of Temperance.

"Live and let live!" was his motto.

"Publicans," he argued, "occupy a highly responsible position. The legalised sale of liquor produces an enormous revenue. People will have some kind of alcoholic drink. The rich have no right to rob the poor of their beer. Is it not then far better that liquor should be sold by good, than by bad men—by Christians, than by Atheists? Suppose we parsons combine to drive all decent publicans out of the trade. It will be usurped by men without conscience, who will make haste to get rich. Their only object being to realise a fortune as soon as possible, they will not scruple to make drunkards, to sell a bad, adulterated, poisonous article, so long as they can avoid legal penalties, or an exposure which would endanger their license."

In his long walks and rides, the Curate

In his long walks and rides, the Curate found it necessary to take refreshment occasionally, at village inns. He was rather partial to these humble hostelries, but he should not have cared to venture on their wine, even if he could have afforded that luxury. Spirits he did not like, and never drank, except when exhausted by long exposure to cold, damp, or rain. On such occasions, a stimulant quickened the circulation, prevented a cold, and saved his life. He generally preferred good sound ale, in this respect, and in many other characteristics, assimilating closely to Parson Adams. Indeed

if any descendants of that worthy are to be found in the Church, the Curate was one of them! For this harmless indulgence, he was libelled by rabid teetotallers, who, on the strength of six weeks' enforced sobriety, keeping out of the kennel, and the novelty of clean linen, set themselves up as examples reform the world. These, and other wretches, who got drunk in their own houses, reviled the Curate, as "a moderate drinker," the cause of all drunkenness! They abused him, as his Master had been abused by similar hypocrites; as a companion of similar hypocrites; as a companion of publicans and sinners. One respectable old wolf in sheep's clothing, a Primitive Calvinistic lay-preacher (a saint in his own opinion and that of his sect; a dishonest grocer in that of the world), signalised his conversion, by emptying a whole hogshead of wine into the gutter! It chanced that the Curate was passing during this Act of Faith. Carnally-minded sons of Belial, who spoke of Mr. Gnatstrainer as a canting old thief, said that he had kept the cask in readiness, and gave the cooper orders to stave it in, just as gave the cooper orders to stave it in, just as Mr. Weatherall was seen approaching. A large crowd obstructed the thoroughfare, and Mr. Weatherall stopped. Mr. Gnatstrainer (who wore a white neck-cloth as well as a white apron) could not resist the temptation to do a little preaching; to improve the opportunity, and advertise himself. A number of poor people, men, women, boys,

and girls, were trying to drink the wine from the pavement, and even to scoop it up in cups and mugs. The scene had more the character of a Bacchanalian orgie, than a lesson in Temperance. The provider of this singular entertainment, expatiated on the text, "Touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing." It was certainly appropriate, as the wine was not improved by contact with the ground. Clearing his throat, turning up his eyes, groaning, and speaking through his nose, he pointed to the crowd, and began:

"Look at them human beings, made in God's image, ackshally drinkin' from off the street, the liquid pison, which even the hanimals refuse to taste. Behold that dog! He sniffs, but will not taste. He seemeth to say, 'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' Ye who drink of the accursed intoxicating fluid are wusser than dogs. Viler are ye than the beasts that perish. I know your thoughts. Yea, verily, ye will seek to extenuate your grievous sin, and shun the rebuke of the preacher. But ye shall not turn aside my righteous wrath. I am no dumb dog, lying down, and loving to slumber. Therefore I will cry aloud and spare not. In vain will ye urge that it is but a little drop. Ah! my brethren and sistern, that is the wretched carnal excuse of the moderate drinker, the most dangerous of drinkers, the heaviest of backsliders. For he it is who

keeps in countenance the poor drunkard. Who is responsible for all the wife-beatings, the quarrels, the fights, the murders, the suicides, the thefts, the forgeries—in short, for all the crimes committed by drunkards? Who, but the moderate drinker! If there were no moderate drinkers, there would be no drunkards. Drink causes all the evil in the world. Now all drunkards begin by moderate drinking. You can't get drunk all at oncet. I know!"

"You seem to know all about it," said a

jeering voice.

"I'll bet a penny that scoffer is a moderate drinker. He insinuates that I myself have been one of those midnight revellers, who sit late at the wine—but my worst enemy cannot say I ever was a moderate drinker."

"No, indeed!" cried the same voice.

"You always went the whole hog."

Here there was a shout of merriment at the expense of Mr. Gnatstrainer, who, though discomfited, bellowed out that the moderate drinker, while restraining his own thirst, led on drunkards to their ruin, like an incarnate fiend. He then indulged in the usual false statements of the fabulous sums spent in drink. While speaking, he kept glancing "out of the tail of his eye," at Rev. Mr. Weatherall, whom he cordially hated as a moderate drinker, and a respectable minister of the Establishment. The Curate was silent. Mr. Gnatstrainer determined to goad him

into speech. Pointing to the men, women and children occupied in drinking, scuffling and trying to save some of the wine, he shook his head, and addressing the Curate, said:

"A sad sight. A sad sight!"

"It is, indeed," said the Curate drily.

"I did not expect you would say so." "Why not?"

- "Because you are not a Temperance advocate."
 - "I am a Christian minister."

"I don't dispute that."

"Every Christian professor, let alone a minister, is, or ought to be, an advocate of Temperance by precept and example."

"Very true. The same here. But you are not a Total Abstainer. That's what I

mean."

"Then you should say what you mean. Temperance and Total Abstinence are different things."

"And I maintain that the only raal

Christian must be a total abstainer."

Mr. Gnatstrainer raised his voice, and held his head on one side in a very knowing manner, which plainly implied: Hear me

pose the parson!

"Can you, Mr. Weatherall, give me a reason why every Christian should not beeven as I am now—a total abstainer. Oh! my brethern, oncet I wallowed in the mire of sin and iniquity. But now I am purged;

now I am washed; now I am clean;

"When you have done preaching, Mr. Gnatstrainer, I will answer your question."
"You think you can answer it?"

"I think I can, sir."

"Indeed! Well, what is your answer?"

"This: No Christian should pretend to be better than his Master. Christ was a moderate drinker. To preach total abstinence is to preach a New Gospel."

"Believe him not, my friends! The wine which our Lo-ard drank was not intoxicating wine. It was not fermented. It was the

pure juice of the grape!"*

"Why, then, when the Apostles spake with tongues, that is, in various languages, did some people say: 'These men are full of new wine? And why did St. Peter reply: These men are not drunken, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, that is nine o'clock in the morning. If the wine was not intoxicating, the charge of drunkenness, and the Apostle's reply are equally meaningless. Besides, if the wine was only grape-juice unformatical it must be a drunk immediately. fermented, it must have been drunk immediately; and could only have been used during the grape season! Whereas, the fact that wine was kept in skins, and used all the year round, proves it to have been fermented

^{*} This view is commonly maintained by self-appointed teachers of the Gospel. I once incidentally heard it maintained by the late Mr. Cruikshank.

wine drank by Our Saviour, and instituted as the Sacramental element for all Christians."

This answer, meeting the approval of the more intelligent by-standers, rather staggered Mr. Gnatstrainer.

He said: "I don't pretend to contend with you in learnin'! But do you really condemn total abstainers and say they ain't Christians?"

"Oh, no! Mr. Gnatstrainer, you misunderstand."

"Why you said we wos preachin' a noo

Gospel."

- "Certainly, when you make total abstinence the symbol of Christianity. When you condemn the moderate drinker, you condemn Our Saviour! You say moderate drinkers are not Christians."
- "And don't you say total abstainers are not Christians?"
- "I never said anything so absurd and uncharitable. God forbid I should condemn any man for acting according to conscience. God alone knows the heart. Our Saviour never made the use of, or abstinence from, intoxicating liquor, a test of Christianity. While practising and enjoining moderation, He left His disciples perfectly free to drink, or abstain. If a man cannot afford wine—I confess I cannot—ale, or spirits, or if he dislikes all intoxicating liquor, or if he likes it too well, and cannot copy Our Master's example, of drinking in moderation; if he

cannot use, without abusing any creature comfort, let him abstain altogether!"

"Like me!" exclaimed Mr. Gnatstrainer,

posing as a bright example.

"But," continued the Curate, "let not such an abstainer attempt to force his likes and dislikes upon me, or make me the scapegoat of his tender conscience, or his want of self-restraint. Above all, let him take care not to glorify himself for his very weakness, not to parade before his fellow men as a virtue, that which, between God and his own conscience, he knows to be a vice."

Mr. Gnatstrainer was a converted drunkard. Report said that he had broken his pledge, and still drank in private; that it was hankering after drink, which made him especially bitter upon moderate drinkers, able to restrain their appetites. Some sons of Belial added, that if Gnatstrainer really were an abstainer from drink, he amply indemnified himself by indulging other appetites and passions without any restraint. He was a glutton, a miser, a dishonest trader, a bad landlord, a bad husband, a bad father, a domestic tyrant, an oppressor of the poor, a man without any real principle. His religion was only a cloak. His abominable cant made his conduct infinitely worse. Some even hinted at darker, unmentionable sins and crimes. It was undeniable, that, besides saving a considerable sum by denying his family, servants, and apprentices, all intoxica-

ting drink, he largely increased his business by advertising himself as a total abstainer. They said, verily, he had his reward in hard cash, as well as praise, and social notoriety. If these reports were true, the respectable Mr. Gnatstrainer (said to be worth £60,000), quite equalled—it would be impossible to surpass—that accomplished hypocrite, and hoary reprobate, Mr. Thomas Trumbull, alias Turnpenny, the pious smuggler, who conducted family worship with an indecent book in his bosom, as depicted in "Redgauntlet." Such a character is evidently a life-portrait. The great novelist never could, or would, have invented such a villain! Naturally nettled at hearing the truth about himself, this saintly grocer accused the Curate of gross personality, or, as he pronounced it, "pussonality."

"You are very eloquent, sir. You have the gift of the gab. Doubtless you'll rise in the gift of the gab. Doubtiess you in rise in the State Church, and make as good a thing out of it, as the Rector, who gets £900, and can't write his own sermons! But, do you mean to imply that I am a hypocrite?"

"I disclaim all idea of judging another."

"So you say. But you evidently referred

to me. Now, do you mean to say I have not done a good action?"

"What! in wasting a hogshead of wine?"

"Yes, in pouring out in the gutter the per-nicious pison which is destroying human souls and bodies."

"When abused."

"I don't pride myself on good works. Salvation is by faith alone. But, I say, in destroying this pison, I have done a good work. Do you deny it?"

"Since you press the question, I say frankly I think you have not done a good

action."

"A bad one, perhaps you call it?"

"I certainly think it wrong."

"Oh, indeed!"

"I will go further, and say you had no right to waste so much good wine."

"No right! What do you mean, Mr.

Curate?"

"Be good enough to call me by my name. You would not like me to call you Mr. Grocer."

"Very well — Mr. Weatherall. But the wine was my own, bought and paid for—or at least, will be paid for. Have I not a right to do what I will with my own?"

"I question not your *legal* right, but your *moral* right as Man, Christian, (and I may add, as a professing philanthropist and teacher, who claims to be an example) to waste what is capable of doing so much good."

"I don't drink wine, nor no intoxicatin' liquors myself, nor none of my family, nor 'ousehold. What should I have done with this wine?"

"If you had asked me that question in time, I should have said, give it to me."

Mr. Gnatstrainer burst into a fit of sneering laughter, which is always so unpleasant and offensive to a disputant.

"Oho, Mr. Curate! I see through you

now."

"Perhaps not so clearly as I see through

you, Mr. Grocer."

"You said just now, Mr. Weatherall, you could not afford to drink wine at your own expense, did you not?"

"I did, Mr. Gnatstrainer. What, then?"

"Why, it seems you are ready enough to drink it if others pay for it."

"Not too ready, I hope. When I dine out, I do not refuse wine, because my host pays for it."

"I don't mean that. But if I'd offered you this wine, you would have accepted it?"

"Certainly."

"And drank it, I suppose?"

- "Not one glass! I would have accepted it only in trust for the poor and the sick. It would have saved me many a bottle, which I can ill afford to give away. In that way only would I have benefitted by your benefaction."
- Mr. Gnatstrainer's sneer did not meet encouragement. He knew, as well as every listener, that the Curate spoke the truth.
- "Oh, sir," said a poor woman, "that there wine running away in the gutter, would have put new life into my pore consumptive Jane. The doctor said she should have it, but

unless you or Mr. Headlong sends me a bottle, I never can get it."

"All bosh," said the saintly grocer.

"Wine never did no one no good—not a mossel"

"Hospitals tell a different tale. Had you sent that wine to our Infirmary, you would have obeyed our Saviour's command to succour the poor and sick. That would have been a good work."

"Good works! Don't talk to me about good works. I don't hold with good works."

- "You don't do them," said the wag in the crowd.
- "It's a dangerous doctrine, is Salvation by Works, only worthy of the Scarlet Whore of Babylon, and Rome, and Canterbury. But if you brag of works, I say I have done a raal good work, and set an example, in destroying so much liquid pison! You pretend not to judge motives, yet you say I've done a bad haction, in wastin' so much valuable property. That there wine is fust-rate, and costs me a pretty penny. Come now, Mr. Parson, what do you think my motive was?"

"Do you really desire an answer?"

"In course I do. Out with it."

"Unless I greatly err, then, your motive was to advertise yourself, and your business, to draw customers, and obtain popularity, to gratify personal vanity, and to gain the praise of mistaken people."

"That's soon said. Prove it."

"Easily! You pretend you destroyed this wine from a sense of duty. I don't credit you with being so silly. But, suppose that was your motive, why did you not empty the cask privately, in your back yard or garden? That would have answered your pretended purpose far more effectually, than staving in the cask in the public street. No sir, your real motive is palpable—Notoriety! Ostentation! Vanity! You have acted like the Pharisees, against whom our Saviour warns us, who love to pray aloud, standing at street corners, for they love to be seen of men. And to you apply the words, 'Verily they have their reward.'"

This parting shot told. It found the weak place in the hypocrite's armour. Ostentation was the real motive. The truth so confounded Mr. Gnatstrainer that even his habitual assurance failed him. He had no answer ready. The crowd began to laugh and jeer. Nettled at this demonstration he took refuge in spite.

"Well, sir, you're welcome to 'ave the last word. You may call yourself a Christian minister. I consider you but a muzzled slave of the Establishment, a church which neither practizes nor preaches the Gospel; an offshoot from the scarlet whore of Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints. You've told me pretty plainly I'm a hyprocite. Now I tell you, with all your popularity, you're over-rated. You're only a saint in com-

parison with the Rector! But I'll pay you off for this insult, or my name is not Gnatstrainer! I'll unmask you. I'll show you up in your true colours. If you're livin' respectable with your pore hold mother, visitin' the pore, and givin' 'em bottles of wine; it ain't because your 'art's in parish work; but to get a name, and sell yourself for 'igher pay. Wait till temptation comes. Pride goeth afore a fall. You don't preach the true Gospel—Faith without works. You're no better nor a Harminian, a Hagragrian, and a Herastian."

By these words, the irate grocer meant to show his theological learning. But even had he said Arminian, Arian, and Erastian, the crowd would have been equally angry, under the impression that he had hurled the most opprobrious names at the Curate! A hoarse roar of indignation was followed by abuse, and it seemed probable that the inevitable dead cat, and rotten egg, would have been the prelude to actual ill-usage of the grocer. Mr. Spry, a Yankee gentleman, incited to a breach of the peace, by drawling out:

"Say! in my country, ef a respectable gospel minister was sassed and riled in that there fashion, we would lynch the durned cuss

there fashion, we would lynch the durned cuss pretty considerably smart, I reckon!"

But the Curate intervened, poured oil on the waters of strife, and pacified the people. Their rage died away in murmurs, and occasional interjectional remarks. "Got to the

end of your charity, Mr. Grocer?" "Done your preaching?" "Stow your cant!" "Shut up, hypocrite!" And one woman seemed to find great relief, in calling out to Mr. Gnatstrainer, "Git out, you pore Wesleyan fool!"

The grocer evidently thought it time to get in! But true to his character of Tartuffe, or Mawworm (which part he could not be said to act, but to live, and illustrate), he whined out to his apprentices, "Come in, bys (boys), I shake the dust off of my feet agin them persecutors, them bellowin' bulls of Bashan. The Lo-ard has more work for his chosen ones!"

The unknown aggravator fired this farewell shot:

'Sand the sugar, and go to prayers!"
This was not calculated to soothe the grocer. So when on entering his shop, he saw his youngest boy with his hands in the till, he saluted young Hopeful with a sound box on the ear.

"Boo-hoo! what did you 'it me for, father? I ain't doin' nothink!"

"Ain't doin' nothink, with your 'ands full of coppers! I'll teach you to steal, and lie, too, you young varmint!"

"You never said a truer word, father!

You do teach me to steal and lie!"

"I—teach you to steal and lie—I?"

"Yes; you set me the example. You tell lies to customers; you teach me to do the same. You give short weight. You cheat the pore. Ain't that stealin'?"

"No, it ain't; it's quite different. You should keep your 'ands from pickin' and stealin', and your tongue from evil speakin', lyin' and slanderin', and learn and labour truly to git a h'honest livin'——"

"Like you, father!"

"Certainly. Sharpness in bizness is very different from stealin'! If I had been a bad

boy, and stole from my father, I should have come to a bad hend, instead of bein' a Deacon, and worth £50,000."

As the counter was between them, Mr. As the counter was between them, Mr. Gnatstrainer postponed punishing his boy, and improved the opportunity by delivering a short moral (or immoral) lecture on the text "Why steal?" The object was to convince his apprentices, that there was a vast difference between hourly compromise with truth and honesty, absolutely necessary in business, and open theft and perjury, both which, as breaches of the law, were dangerous, and not to be practised. The moralist did, indeed, hint that there was no general rule without hint that there was no general rule without exceptions.

There was an overwhelming amount of temptation irresistible to "pore," weak, frail, fallen, erring human nature, and, after all, good works were "filthy rags," and the "Lo-ard" was merciful to His elect! But even in such contingencies, it was safer not to yield, unless present profit were great and certain,

and the prospect of being found out so remote as to be morally impossible. He pointed to himself, as an illustration of his principles. Open theft was not only wrong, but foolish—a blunder, as well as a crime. When immense fortunes could be made, as they actually are made in business, what madness to break the law! He concluded by a pathetic repetition of his text: "Why steal?"

As we have already heard the "converted and saved" Calvinistic grocer preach, I merely summarise his lecture. Superfluous to report principles so generally practised, and already immortalised in "Holy Willie's Prayer."



CHAPTER III.

A COUNTRY CURATE PREACHES AGAINST FIELD SPORTS.

"In all countries, Papal or Protestant, the frightful sufferings of the non-human races have always been entirely disregarded by the Church, with an astonishing insensibility to the commonest and most elementary principles of justice or compassion. No Christian sect is free from the terrible reproach."

"JUSTITIA FIAT," Animal World, Nov. 1884.

For what I am about to relate, I hardly venture to ask belief, save on Tertullian's principle: "Credo quid impossibile!" That one of the "inferior clergy" should forfeit all prospect of preferment, by daring to preach against the cruelty of the aristocracy and gentry-and this in the country, and seventeen years ago—is an incident barely possible, but so highly improbable as to place it beyond the domain of Fiction. Even now, such boldness is opposed to current ideas of clerical morality. A correspondent of The Animal World denounced the wanton cruelty of shooting wild fowl on the Yorkshire coast, and pleaded for the interference of the upper classes. "With regard to the clergy, any appeal to them is hopeless.

their professional capacity, and as a body, what (except in very exceptional cases, for the most part touching vivisection) have they ever done in the cause of humanity towards animals? When did you ever hear any advice from the pulpit respecting the treatment of animals in the slaughter-house, and those (man's helpmates) on the farm? Did anyone ever hear a sermon against the barbarities of fox-hunting, and the battue? I never did." ("DIFFERENTIAL," A. W. October 1884) October, 1884.)

The A. W. of April, 1885, contained a reply from Dr. James Turner, Bishop of Grafton and Armidale, N.S.W. He observes, "That battues are not preached against may be true, as anyone can see, that to preach about such a subject in any country parish where such things go on would simply be to preach against the squire."

squire."

squire."
Differential rejoins:—"Not only do clergymen in the pulpit, as a general rule, neglect all reference to the crime of cruelty to animals, but a considerable number of country clergymen render themselves unqualified to say a word against it, from being themselves as keen sportsmen as any of their flock. Lastly, with all respect to the bishop, I do not see why any clergyman ought, in his sermons, to study the squire's feelings. The squire is not his Master. Supposing the squire a notorious drunkard, is the

minister never to preach against drunkenness?"

The majority of the clergy seem to agree with the colonial bishop, that to preach against the squire, is a kind of blasphemy. We have this test of the curate's moral courage, or temerity. The subject had long occupied his thoughts. Mr. Weatherall further prepared himself by study, meditation, and prayer. Compared with the Rector's library, the Curate's was insignificant. The Rector's books were unread. The Curate's all showed marginal references and annotations. The poor man references and annotations. The poor man was despised for not being in Society, by frivolous worldlings, not privileged to enter that society of "The Mighty Dead," daily frequented by the Curate, in his shabby library. The sermon had been well advertised. This caused proportionate excitement. Country squires thought the Curate would "funk." Anonymous letters—some scornful, some threatening some pitving some warm some threatening, some pitying, some warning—only spurred him on. He requested the Churchwardens to take all requisite precautions against "brawling." The people's Churchwarden (a Dissenter gone astray, a sound Protestant who said "Ritualists should be blown up by dynamite") said, "I'd like to see anyone attempt to brawl. I'd have him out in a jiffy, even if he were the Earl of Laxington himself."

On the appointed Sunday, the parish church

was crammed. It was then seen that the two factions-one for, the other against, Fieldsports—were about equal. Roughly speaking, the upper classes were for, the lower classes against—though to this rule, were several exceptions. The Curate was popular. Rumour had exaggerated the opposition. Under the impression that he might be exposed to insult, or even to personal violence, his humble friends rallied round him. It was evident that any attempt to over-awe, or intimidate, would provoke reprisals. Paradoxical as it may seem, hostility to—resulted in protection of—the Curate! Amiable "Nothingarians" attended, in the hope of seeing a Christian church desecrated by a free fight. They were disappointed. A sermon in the third chapter might lead many to close the volume, under the erroneous impression that, having no story to tell, I had "gone off" into preaching. I follow the example of our late Liberal government, and compromise. The development of my story obliges me to introduce some extracts from the Curate's sermon. His text was Romans viii., 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." He showed no timidity, no hesitation, and made no apology, but spake as with authority. He introduced his subject, and at once awakened interest, by a beautiful and pathetic anecdote which he called:

"A ROYAL LESSON IN HUMANITY.

"An ancient Indian king tested which of his three sons was most worthy to reign, by their respective kindness to animals. The eldest had a noble steed. The second a favourite goat. The third only a little dove. The king's sons travelled for a year. The eldest rode the noble steed to death. The second killed the goat for food. The third son tamed and attached the dove, so that when the prince was ill, the old king witnessed a most pathetic scene. The dove. with drooping eyes, perched on the sick man's hand, and peered into his eyes. Then, fluttering round the tent, the bird rested on its master's spear. Again seeking the sick couch, it hopped on hand, arm, head and shoulder, touched softly lips and cheeks; at last flew to its own food, and picking up the seeds, dropped them one by one into its master's hand. With kind deceit, the prince placed some seeds within his mouth. bird, still reading sickness in the pale countenance and languid eyes, renewed its round, seeming to seek assistance from observers. Melted into tears the old king thus addressed his elder sons: 'Unhappy men, how have you treated my living presents. He who misuses animals, is unfit to rule over men. Animals never enflame passions nor irritate pride.* As you rode that noble steed to death, so would you tyrannically chastise my people. You, untouched by the all-but-human intelligence of that goat, would remain dead to human wisdom and virtue. As you feasted on its flesh, so would you fleece my subjects. I will not commit the happiness of millions to such men. But you, the youngest, scorned not my humble gift. You could win a bird's affection. Would that my fond goat and peerless steed had been given to you—my heir and king. He who can subdue and attach dumb animals, is fit to rule with justice and mercy, and to decide with truth."

The Curate observed: "The moral of this touching tale will not impress 'honourable men' who despise all dark-skinned races. I have heard a young officer call a high-class Hindoo, a nigger. This un-Christian pride helped to cause the Indian mutiny. A European prince, or nobleman, or country squire, thinks nothing of riding a noble horse to death; would kill the most intelligent of goats, rather than want a dinner; and trains

^{*} They never ought to do so. But they frequently inflame ill-regulated passions. For warning, read "Studgroom's" anecdote of a magistrate of Wells, who shot his dog, kicked it into a ditch, and left it to die in agony, all for making a false point! (Animal World, November 1882). A man capable of murdering his fellow-animal, should have been at once removed from the Commission of the Peace.

[†] Abbreviated from Mushet's "Wrongs of the Animal World," 1839, Hatchard.

a dove, by turning it into a target!" He then took a bird's-eye-view of:

"HIGH LIFE LESSONS IN CRUELTY.

"The rich teach cruelty to the poor, by Sports and Epicurism. The French represent two English country squires saying, 'What a fine day.' 'Beautiful! Let us go and kill something.' Is this satire? Is it not literal truth? Some people are never happy, except when engaged in killing some animal. This illustrates the corruption of human nature, consequent on man's fall. There will be no hunting, shooting, fishing and coursing in Paradise. 'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.' (Isaiah xi. 9.) Hindoos excel Christians in kindness to animals. This innate love of inflicting pain, characterises all men, women and children. It enters into the field-sports of the aristocracy and gentry, and the amusements of the people. I say this—not to set class against class, but I say this—not to set class against class, but as an all-important truth, the only fair and just way of dealing with the subject, and applying a practical remedy. To banish cruelty, we must begin at the top of the social pyramid. Cruelty in princes and peers, is a greater sin than in peasants. Its results are more mischievous. The upper classes exercise cruelty on a grander scale, and set a very bad example to their social inferiors. Mrs. Hannah More taught this, in her excellent little manual on 'The manners of the great.' 'Ye are the makers of manners.' Reform must begin at home. 'Blood and Culture,' 'Sweetness and Light,' should learn that the gratification of this innate love of cruelty, is the chief ingredient of sport." He then gave, from Soame Jenyns, this startling but perfectly correct—

"DEFINITION OF A SPORTSMAN!

"Suppose a superior being whose whole endeavours and pleasures consist in terrifying, ensnaring, tormenting, and destroying mankind! whose superior faculties are exerted in contriving engines of destruction, and inciting contriving engines of destruction, and inciting us to use them in maiming and murdering each other; whose power over us is employed in assisting the rapacious, deceiving the simple, and oppressing the innocent; who, without provocation or advantage, continues daily, void of all pity or remorse, thus to torment mankind for diversion, and endeavours with the utmost care to preserve our lives and propagate our species, to increase the number of victims, delighted in proportion to the misery he occasions! We could find no name too detestable for such a being! Yet —with regard to animals—just such a being is a Sportsman!" Here there was what newspaper reports call "Sensation." After a moral analysis of the various Field-sports, and a scathing denunciation of pigeon-trap shoot-ing, the preacher asked, with indignant scorn, if a Tournament of Doves were

A LADY-LIKE SPORT?

"Good society logically replied yes! If pigeon-trap shooting is fit for Royalty, nobility, gentry, it is fit for ladies. They complacently gloat over the dying agonies of those gentlest of birds. Why should not ladies kill and wound pigeons? From one point of view, the sport is pre eminently feminine. So decidedly safe; no fatigue, or protracted exposure to weather. Little or no risk from accident, unless some nervous, near-sighted prince, or poblemen, or gentlemen. sighted prince, or nobleman, or gentleman, should fire in a totally wrong direction. As regards danger, pigeon trap shooting is far more eligible than hunting. The shooting is comparatively easy. It seems difficult to miss a half-blinded, half-crushed bird, just let loose from a dark box! It is not yet good form for ladies to shoot doves. Fashion is not yet quite enfranchised. Fastidious critics denounce the presence of ladies at these tournaments. What! can gentle, noble, and royal women gaze on such cruel sport, and so sanction it? Can they bear to behold—and even to handle—the victims of such butchery? To lift the poor blood-stained dead or dying doves, and peer curiously into eyes a moment before so bright, now glazing in death, and mark the contrast between the white plumage and its crimson dye!

"And this participation in blood-shedding sports is confined to women of the upper

classes! It is not a feature of the lower classes! It is not a feature of the lower classes. The sporting 'Coster,' or the 'Rough,' does not take 'Black-eyed Sal, his blowing,' to see rats killed by terriers. Such spectacles are voted unwomanly in the lowest society at the East-end. Women of the humbler ranks have many failings, and lack the repose 'Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere,' but they are far truer women, in this, that they do not encourage the brutalizing, blood-shedding sports of their male relatives. Here these poor despised women relatives. Here, these poor, despised women, set an example to some of the highest ladies. How sad to see beautiful, accomplished, refined women demoralised to the extent of sanctioning, by their presence, such cruel sports! Female fashion does not patronise cock-fighting and rat-killing. It would puzzle a casuist to say, Why not? Cock-fighting is not worse—rat-killing far less disgraceful—than pigeon-trap shooting. Vermin must be killed. A well-trained terrier kills rats mercifully. Their sufferings are not to be compared to those of pigeons. Prejudice alone prevents titled ladies from participating in the humours of the rat-pit. Prejudice alone makes that low-lived sport appear more disgusting than the Tournament of Doves, patronised by fair women. Ladies chatter gaily amid this wanton slaughter. They can do such things, untroubled by memories of that awful scene in the opera of *Der Freischutz*, and the horrible catastrophe—the white dove, the dying

maiden, the old soldier's mocking comment on the charmed bullets—'Three go askew!' Oh! have the fair, fashionable triflers no fear of some terrible accident, some Nemesis, some judgment, interrupting their cruel, unhallowed sport?"——

Here the preacher paused abruptly, visibly affected by the picture he had conjured up, and unable to proceed. His sudden silence formed a startling contrast to the piercing tones of the last sentence. His emotion was painful. He seemed about to faint. But by a great effort, he mastered his feelings, recovered, and proceeded:

"Some of you, perhaps, think me too severe. Hear, then, what *The Times* published not three months since, on

"THE EXAMPLE OF HURLINGHAM."

He then read a very strong article from The Times, August, 1870, and in an eloquent peroration, concluded thus:—"Have I said anything so strong as this? No! Here The Times distinctly denounces Hurlingham as the scene of an irrational, brutalising 'sport,' originating a new species of gambling, a mere vehicle for idle betting, and invokes the instinctive feeling of all true Englishmen, and all lovers of legitimate sport, to put down practices revolting to humanity

and common sense.* I dare not trust myself to comment on this quotation. I deeply regret that our Reformed Church has permitted itself to be taught its duty, by a lay-writer. Far better had the Clergy led the way in denouncing this and other brutalising sports which disgrace our Court, Aristocracy, Society, and People. I, at least, am not too proud to learn from the Laity, and I trust many of my brethren will follow the lead of The Times, in speaking out from the pulpit against all forms of Cruelty to animals. Such scenes disgrace our professions of Christianity and civilisation. The presence of ladies at a grand pigeon slaughter, with eager gratification, watching princes, peers, and gentlemen doing the work of amateur butchers, practically illustrates Lady Wortley Montague's severe and salutary satire, when to a Turkish lady at Constantinople, she acknowleged 'that she had reason to prefer manners to our ridiculous Mohammedan customs, a confused medley of the rigid maxims of Christianity, with all the libertinism of the Spartans.'"

The Curate finished. The silence that

^{*} If this heavy charge was true in 1870, for seven years Hurlingham has persisted in outraging the feelings of all true Englishmen and legitimate sportsmen! And so effectual has been the Princely example of Hurlingham, that it is still able to defy enlightened public opinion. Pigeon-trap shooting will not be put down, except by the strong arm of the law. An Act of Parliament will not except Hurlingham!

succeeded was so profound that one might have heard the proverbial pin drop. He had cast a spell over that large congregation. They thought he had been preaching only twenty minutes. In reality he had spoken for nearly an hour. The Curate's preaching was a marked contrast to the Rector's reading. Mr. Headlong, having carefully adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles, pored over his lithographed "manuscript," never raising his head, or his voice, above its usual drawing-room pitch. The people's churchwarden had frequently told the Rector that he was inaudible to two-thirds of the congregation, especially by the poor miserable sinners in the back seats, who stood most in need of edification. The Rector droned on as usual. edification. The Rector droned on as usual. He resented as an impertinence any criticism on so holy a personage as himself. For though he neither understood nor believed the greater part of the Thirty Nine Articles, he had implicit faith in himself. The Curate, though as a young preacher, he had much to learn, was in a fair way to become a perfect pulpit orator. This was due not merely to ability and natural eloquence. For these alone are not sufficient to make an orator. The secret was that the Curate did not despise the laity, was willing to learn, and not too proud to take a hint. His good sense and good temper enabled him to escape many tricks and errors, which prove sad stumbling blocks to young and old preachers. For

example, he avoided all ungainly attitudes and gestures. He knew how to stand easily, unembarrassed, but not defiantly in the pulpit. He did not lounge ungracefully, like the Rev. Mr. Lollop, with the left shoulder a

foot higher than the right.

The Rev. Mr. Weatherall thought the first requisite of a preacher was to make himself intelligible. Some preachers speak too loud, many too low. The Curate, by practice, acquired the happy medium. He was distinctly audible by "miserable sinners" near the doors, without excruciating the tympana of "miserable sinners" in the best pews. His articulation was perfect. He did not murder his manuscript, like preachers who illustrate the familiar couplet respecting sermons:

"Of English clergy 'tis confest,
They preach the worst—they make the best."

The Curate declaimed his sermon so naturally, that a critical hearer could hardly tell that he was reading. Matter and manner were both good. He was skilled in composition. His sentences were short and pithy, so that their sense was easily apprehended. He never used two words where one word would serve. He preferred short to long words, and Saxon to Latin. He did not drag in allusions merely to show his classical learning. He was somewhat deficient in action. Good taste made him shun all that mechanical movement so overdone by

amateurs. But when his feelings were wrought up, he sometimes unconsciously iudulged in appropriate and forcible gesture. He had now charmed his friends, and temporarily disarmed his enemies. The sermon, judging by its effects, was a complete success. But when the hearers had time to reflect, a

reaction set in. Opponents fell back on their stock objections and platitudes. The Curate was warmly assailed, and obstinately de-

fended.

"Laudatur ab his; culpatur ab illis."
On his way through the churchyard, he passed groups of excited parishioners, engaged in animated debate. Whether he did right in touching on such a vexed and delicate subject in the pulpit? Whether his attacks on Field-sports were justifiable, or only so much claptrap? In proportion as he had disgusted, and mortally offended the game-preserving aristocracy and gentry, had he delighted the people, and all persons too poor to take out a shooting licence. The whole tribe of fox, hare and stag-hunters were furious. Men who shot, but never rode after hounds, praised the attack on hunting. "But why condemn shooting? Game must be shot. What else was it preserved for, or created for?" Anglers abandoned all sympathy with hunting and shooting. "But it is too bad to censure Angling, praised and practised by good Isaac Walton, as a humane and clerical sport." Each defended his favourite sport,

as each respectable Pharisee hugs his own besetting sin. The general opinion was that the young man had done for himself, and annihilated all chance of preferment in the State Church, though Dissenters might bid high for him. Even his defenders and partisans made up their minds to lose him. The noble M.F.H. would never suffer such a clerical *Marplot* to be a thorn in his side in a

hunting county.

The Earl of Laxington and his only child, Lady Honoria Forrester, were in church. Doubtless it taxed all their pride and philosophy, to maintain the calm repose of their aristocratic features. It was not difficult for a close observer to divine that both were profoundly offended. The Earl certainly looked savage. And the expression on Lady Honoria's countenance showed that she meant mischief. Some people wondered that the Earl and his daughter could sit out the sermon. But their conduct was politic. For had they manifested their displeasure by quitting the church in the middle of the sermon, it would have been said that the cap fitted, to say nothing of affording the pulpit orator a chance similar to that so ably seized by Cicero, when, after driving Catiline from the Senate House, he broke forth with "Abiit erupit, evasit," &c. &c. The Radicals were not indulged with such a triumph. They might speculate on the feelings of the noble auditors, but could not allege that the Earl

and Lady Honoria were actually unable to listen to the truth; that the Curate had literally driven them out of the church. The Earl of Laxington had the praiseworthy habit of not driving to church, except in bad weather. And as he and his daughter walked home a distance of two miles, through his beautiful park, he had ample opportunity of opening the safety-valve, and blowing off the superfluous steam, which might otherwise have burst the boiler. To speak wise have burst the boiler. To speak without metaphor, the Earl could at last relieve his pent-up feelings of indignation, which, if longer restrained, threatened a fit of apoplexy. And if the Earl did use strong language, it was only natural, and what you or I, dear reader, would probably have done in his place, exposed to similar provocation. It was amusing to hear the flying reports of how the Earl swore, and of the awful threats and depunciations he used against the Curate. and denunciations he used against the Curate. Because the Earl was tête-à-tête with his daughter, and even if he had raised his daughter, and even if he had raised his voice in anger, could hardly be heard or understood by the male and female servants, who followed or preceded, at an interval of a quarter of a mile. Those who originated such reports, only imputed their own strong language to the Earl, and by dint of repeating what they would have said in his place, ended in believing that the Earl had actually spoken the words put into his mouth. The Earl kept telling his daughter what he would do

and what he would not do, about the Curate. Lady Honoria prudently let her father talk. She listened, and was silent. But as Lady Honoria is the principal character of my female dramatis personæ, she deserves a formal introduction in a new chapter.



CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE CURATE'S SERMON.

THE Lady Honoria Forrester was what is generally called, in our Insular phraseology, "a fine woman," or "a doosed fine woman." Her height was five feet seven inches. thought her too tall; but they could not truthfully call her a maypole, or clumsy. Her figure was perfectly proportioned—but here again, I am going too fast, in the opinion of her critical lady friends, who one and all agreed that her waist was too large. Men thought differently. The truth is, Lady Honoria had preferred to leave her waist, its natural size. In this respect, she was quite unfashionable. But artists, doctors, and men of taste, thought her figure far more beautiful than those female forms modelled in the shape of the wasp. As for Lady Honoria's dress, I shall say all that is necessary later on. Her style of beauty inclined far more to the blonde than the brunette. She was lithe and agile, one of those fair women, whose beauty promises to last, without the meretricious aids of "making up," well into, or even beyond the period, of what the French call "la seconde jeunesse" or second youth.

Her character will unfold itself. Sufficient Her character will unfold itself. Sufficient to state here, that Lady Honoria laboured under two misfortunes. As an only child, she was more or less spoilt. During her infancy, her mother had died. A mother's moral training might have modified, or eradicated, erroneous tendencies. Lady Honoria exhibited the perfections and and imperfections of her station and sex. She had a large measure of the beauty, grace, and breeding which characterise the British Aristocracy. She had also the faults which, inseparable from humanity, are often intensified by birth and rank. Pride and intensified by birth and rank. Pride and imperious will were unchecked by servile dependents. She had not, among all her fashionable fairweather acquaintance, one true friend to tell her of her faults; to open her eyes to the stern realities of life, and of that artificial world of which the Peer's daughter (now in the full flush of youth and hope) saw but the bright side. Lady Honoria had the usual education Lady Honoria had the usual education of her sex, caste, and period. She attempted to improve her mind by reading. She had the run of a good library. But her taste was not properly directed. Her reading was desultory. Her mind exhibited a strange mélange, or mixture of ill-arranged information, with simplicity, and downright ignorance. For example, she was partial to Natural History, and did not know its elementary principles. She objected to the 5* classification of man with animals, and was exceedingly surprised when she was once informed, that a whale was not a fish! Her natural abilities were superior. Had she been born in middle, or humble life, she would probably have excelled in some art. She now frittered away her talents. In the intervals of gaiety, she began enterprises which were never finished, and conceived schemes which came to nothing. She, who might have been a ministering angel to the deserving poor, frequently suffered from ennui!

Lady Honoria's two great faults were flirtation. or coquety carried to excess, and a love of satire, sarcasm, and quizzing the oddities of others, hardly consistent with a good heart. "Les femmes ne connoissent pas toute leur coquetterie." Probably Lady Honoria was not conscious of the encouragement she gave, or of the pain she inflicted. The proverb says: "Hearts are little red things that men and women play with for The proverb says: "Hearts are little red things that men and women play with for money." Lady Honoria scorned this ignoble game. She considered her hand a prize to be coveted by any Prince or Duke in Christendom. Perhaps she was not far wrong in thinking so. Certainly, she was far too good for many princes and noblemen. She flirted neither for love nor money, but for sport. The heart won, her object was attained. Having no further use for it, she threw it away. A true sportsman only covets the pleasure of killing, and gives away his game. Lady Honoria thought no more of her victim's agony, than of the sufferings of the poor hard-hunted and dug-out "Charley," whose brush ornamented her hat, as she rode home triumphantly, after a spanking run with her noble father's hounds. She was indeed a mighty huntress of fox, stag, hare; but the animal she chiefly preferred to hunt, was Man; not of course in the literal sense of pursuing any man, but in the coquettish art (in which the sex are all more or less adepts) of inducing men to pursue. And a beautiful woman is a kind of game which, whether flying, or standing at bay, makes it unpleasant for the hunters.

pursue. And a beautiful woman is a kind of game which, whether flying, or standing at bay, makes it unpleasant for the hunters.

Two seasons had elapsed since Lady Honoria had been first presented to her Sovereign. The vivacious young lady had driven many admirers to the verge of despair. Some ladies used harsh language respecting her, and accused her of degrading her sex and station. Her defenders said she was no more to blame than Lady Mary Wortley Montague, when she received Pope's confession of love, by a hearty fit of laughter. It was certainly not well-bred to laugh in Pope's face, but the lady thought this the best way to resent the insult to her virtue. How ridiculous in him to talk even hypothetically of excusing a wretched body! But would the poet have ventured even so far as this, without some encouragement? And would the haughty

dame have thus resented a similar insult, dame have thus resented a similar insult, from a young and handsome Lord Foppington, or other Gallant, as physically superior as, intellectually inferior to Pope? Perhaps not! Lady Honoria took refuge under the plea of every pretty fashionable woman. Could she help men falling, or fancying themselves in love with her, and then trying to excuse their own folly, by pretending she had given them encouragement? Their assurance was provoking, but vastly amusing! She divided them into various classes. Some got angry and made a scene. An excellent representative of this class was Captain Tearaway, an and made a scene. An excellent representative of this class was Captain Tearaway, an Irish officer in a marching regiment. He had scraped acquaintance with Lady Honoria in the hunting-field, with the cool assurance of his countrymen; on the strength of encouragement, real or imaginary, had proposed; and grew very angry, when her ladyship laughed heartily at the idea that she, an Earl's only daughter, declined to marry a penniless younger son, remarkable for no other accomplishment than riding to hounds, as if he set no value on his neck. hounds, as if he set no value on his neck. The sulky sentimental class was represented by young Spooner of the Supra-Civil Service. He wrote an ode on Lady Honoria's portrait in the Royal Academy, and although he had never spoken to, or seen the original, except in the Park, or at the Opera, raved on through many sickly stanzas, and minutely described his last farewell of the stonyhearted woman who had calmly consigned

him to an early grave!

To complete Lady Honoria's paradoxical position, although an Earl's daughter, beautitiful and fashionable, she had no fortune, and was not likely ever to have any. The estate was strictly entailed on heirs male. It was heavily mortgaged. The Earl lived extravagantly, and upon his death, his daughter was still entitled to the pitiful pittance of two hundred pounds per annum! But of course, before that event, Lady Honoria would have made a splendid matrimonial connection. For with her wit, beauty, and fashion, a fortune was of no consequence. Rumour said, she was already engaged to her cousin, the Honourable Mr. Forrester, the Earl's nephew, and heir to the estate.

The Earl and his daughter arrived at the immense pile of building, called Lexington House. They entered the grand Hall, embellished with stuffed birds and beasts, stags' antlers, foxes' "brushes," and various trophies of the chase. The Earl at once intimated his intention of sending off an express with a

letter to the Rector.

"No, dear papa, you will take luncheon first."

The Earl was too fond of a good dinner, to spoil his appetite at lunch. So, after one helping of the Strasbourg pâté, and two glasses of Madeira, he said:
"Now, my love, I must go and write, or

dictate my note. I suppose Blackadder is in the library?"

"Papa, you know I have already cautioned you about employing Blackadder, in anything

of a private and confidential nature."

"Why not, my love? It's hard if I can't trust my own private secretary, whom I pay

to do my correspondence."

"There is much work of course, which he can do; but I should be afraid of his betraying secrets like this. You know I am a disciple of Lavater—"

"Ah! that's the man who thinks we all resemble some animal or other. Well, he's outdone by Darwin, who says we are only developed animals."

"Well, papa, there's no truth in physiognomy, if Blackadder is to be trusted further

than you can see him."

"I'm glad to find you are so prudent, my love. But I think you a little too suspicious."

- "I can't explain my reasons for disliking him. Call it a presentiment, instinct—what you will. Only I know I'm right. Don't trust him."
- "Well, love, to please you, I will write the letter or note myself. It will be brief. I shall simply tell Headlong to provide himself with another curate."
 - "Won't that offend the Rector?"
- "Pooh! what if it does? If he don't like it he can lump it."

"What, papa, talking slang?"

"Thanks for reproof. Set my lapse down to this precious sermon, which has quite upset me. You know I gave Headlong the living. He ought to have some gratitude."

"A lively sense of favours to come."

"Just so. He expects the reversion of the living for his son—a wild young scamp at Oxford. That's one of the penalties of a married clergy. Not only are the emoluments greater than a poor parish priest has a ments greater than a poor parish priest has a right to expect, but our incumbents, vicars,

right to expect, but our incumbents, vicars, and rectors, consider a living as an appanage in the family, to be transmitted from father to son, like real or personal property."

"According to that, papa, we are living practically under a hereditary priesthood, like the Levitical. I was reading the other day, a defence of the Roman Catholic system, which pointed out that their much-abused clerical celibacy, saved us in the middle ages from the intolerable burden of a ages, from the intolerable burden of a

perpetual hereditary priesthood. To this, it seems, our Reformed Church is returning."

"Upon my word Honoria, I can't conceive how you find time to pick up so much information. I don't mind hearing such remarks entre nous, but don't say that before the Rector, or any clergyman. Our Reformed Church has a determined dislike to any further reforms! Upon the whole, though, I like our system best."

"You may well say so, papa. Our estate was once Church property. And if our

Church should ever be re-united to the Mother Church, I suppose the estate would have to be restored."

"Well, my love, that is not likely to happen in my time, or yours. A much nearer danger threatens. The Radical papers will destroy our Order, and write us out of our estates. I would rather give the estate back to the Church, and see my ancestral mansion turned into a monastery, than behold my park cut up into cabbage-gardens."

"Well, papa, the Rector won't like your interference, and the Rector's wife still less.

She is as proud as Lucifer."

"My love, what a shocking comparison!"

"And not altogether correct. I should have said Lucifer's wife. The Rector is as proud as Lucifer. And for that reason, you should be cautious not to offend them."

"I don't wish to do so, but the Curate—what's his name?—must go. That I'm determined on. He shall not remain to insult me, by preaching at me again. Why he completely forgot himself—to speak evil of dignities as he did."

The Earl seemed to regard the unlucky Curate, somewhat in the light of an upper servant, who had forgotten his place, as completely as the Right Hon. John Bright, when in office, railing at the House of Lords. Lady Honoria had equal cause of offence, but she regulated her temper better, and knew how to manage the Earl. She now said:

- "Papa, you are offended with Mr. Weatherall?"
- "With good cause. Surely you don't take his part? He insulted you, too, by implication."
 - "You wish to punish him?"

"Certainly!"

- "Well, suppose you make Mr. Headlong dismiss him. Is that your idea of punishment?"
- "I can't do anything else To lose a good curacy is punishment. He may not find another in a hurry."
- "But he may; and I think he will. He is very steady. He loves his work. He is a good preacher. And the very circumstance of his dismissal, will be in his favour with many."

"What do you mean, Honoria?"

"Why, papa, you know how divided the congregation and the community are, on this subject—Field sports. Now, if you cause Mr. Weatherall to be dismissed, you make him a martyr. He stands a fair chance of being taken by the hand, and getting a better curacy, or perhaps a benefice, for his moral courage. And that's not the worst. You gratify all our enemies here. They will say his sermon was so true, that you could not tolerate it. The newspapers will take it up!"

"Dash the newspapers!"

"And you will weaken your influence in the county, just when you ought to strengthen it, to support your nominee, the Conservative candidate, at the approaching election."

- "By Jove, that's true, Honoria! That did not occur to me. The fellow made me so wild——"
- "I know, papa. I feel it, too, perhaps more than you. Because, you know, if it's wrong for men to hunt, à fortiori, it's worse for women to hunt."
- "And yet you plead for him——"
 "No, papa; you quite misunderstand. There's a true, though vulgar, proverb about cutting off your nose to spite your face. Here is a clever young curate, who insults his social superiors in the pulpit—takes the privilege of attacking us from Coward's Castle. Now we quite agree that he deserves some punishment. But your plan would do a great deal of harm, and probably benefit Mr. Weatherall far more than injure him. Don't you see?"

"There's a good deal of truth in what you say, Honoria. I'll think it over."

"I'll tell you what, papa. Let's compromise the matter, as the Yankee soldier said to his general. Go into the library, reflect, and, if you like, make a rough draft of a letter. Only, on no account send it, till I have seen it."

"I will."

The Earl did as he was bid. He went into the library and sat down to write. But he was

still too angry to compose a suitable letter. So that he consumed a quire of Bath post, in rough drafts of violent epistles, all of which he tossed into the waste paper basket, save the last letter, which he retained to show his daughter. Waste-paper baskets are very useful. But it would be more prudent to burn your condemned MSS. when you have a prying secretary, or curious servants. The Earl was too much engrossed with composition, to remember his daughter's warning. Before leaving the library, he rang the bell, and requested the attendance of his secretary. That individual entered the library. He was a short, black-haired, beetle-browed, swarthy young man, whose obsequious manner could not conceal his sinister look.

- "Blackadder?"
- "Yes, my lord."
- "See all that litter duly burned."
- "Yes, my lord."
- "Before anyone reads it. I found a housemaid the other day poring over one of my letters."
- "I remember, my lord. She was dismissed at once."
 - "There may be others as curious."
- "It shall be attended to immediately, my lord."

The Earl left the library, while the secretary conveyed the waste paper basket to his own private apartment. Here, he went carefully over the MSS. and selected the most

legible one for preservation, before destroying the rest. Could the Earl have known this employment, he would have agreed with his daughter, that no trust was to be reposed in reptiles of the Blackadder species!

While the Earl was relieving his feelings, by spoiling so much superfine note-paper, marked with his crest and monogram, in the library, Lady Honoria was in her boudoir, communing with a young person, not exactly a servant, companion, or confidant, but a compound, in about equal parts, of all three conditions. Miss Minckes was not more prepossessing in personal appearance, than Mr. possessing in personal appearance, than Mr. Blackadder. Her features were tolerably Blackadder. Her features were tolerably regular, but she had a cast in her eye, which unmannered persons called a squint. This defect by no means tended to improve her temper, or rather, disposition. For many quick-tempered persons are very good-natured. And many persons who never lose their temper, never forgive an offence. And some quick-tempered persons know how to keep a guard on their infirmity. Haydn truly remarks, "It may not be a paradox to say the most waspish men are the best bred. The perpetual consciousness of a defect of temper which would destroy all affection, begets a perpetual effort at control. Reynolds, Lawrence, and Sir George Beaumont, are examples. Reynolds was naturally irritable. His good fortune and success, with the submission he received, kept him amiable, but the first time he was thwarted, he got into a passion and resigned." [Autobiography.] Had Miss Minckes been a young lady of fashion and fortune, she would have been a paragon of self-will and uncontrolled caprice. As a portionless dependent, the young person knew the value of seeming amiable, and kept a strict guard upon her temper. As for her natural disposition, to speak colloquially, and wrongly, that was "past praying for." As if any human being ever could be past praying for! But Miss Minckes had a natural malignity which defied any alterative power, short of that change of heart operated by Regeneration!

Regeneration!

Miss Minckes might have forgiven Lady Honoria for being her benefactress, to the extent of board, lodging, and salary; but she never could forgive her superiority in beauty, grace, fashion, and worldly position. To the dependent, it seemed morally wrong, that one woman should have beauty, rank, everything to attract admirers, while another could not obtain a single suitor. In short, Miss Minckes was one of that unfortunate class of persons devoured by Envy, most baleful of passions! All others may be overcome, moderated, or satiated, by the attainment of their object; not so with that veritable daughter of the horse-leech, *Envy*. That still crieth, "Give! Give!" The envious person is never satisfied, never knows content. For whatever our success in life, we always see some better off

than ourselves. If the envious man gained the whole world, he would envy the contented spirit of the humble. Of the seven devils, none are so difficult to eject as this. Envy is the ever-gnawing serpent, or the vulture of Prometheus. Had Miss Minckes possessed more experience, more philosophy, more religion, she would have suspected how far she helped to make her own troubles. For though thousands of women were better off, hundreds of thousands, millions, might have envied her position. A comfortable, not to say, a luxurious, home, no menial duties to perform a salary of £100 and perguisites. perform, a salary of £100 and perquisites, and an employer, with all her faults and foibles, not devoid of generosity, and consideration. Many poor governesses and companions might have envied Miss Minckes her situation. Between her and Lady Honoria, friendship was out of the question. Even that mutual good-feeling often found between mistress and servant, could not exist. At the slightest symptom of compassion, Miss Minckes morally rolled herself up in her pride, like a hedgehog. Pity, she knew, was akin to contempt. She inwardly resented every kind act, word, even look, of Lady Honoria, as an insult from the Patrician, to be treasured up, and repaid with interest by the Plebeian. Mr. Blackadder was a spy upon the Earl. Miss Minckes was the same upon his daughter. Outwardly, the two dependents were barely civil to each other. But the servants suspected a secret sympathy between them, which the progress of my tale will unfold.

"Well, Matilda," began Lady Honoria, "you were in church this morning?"

"As in duty bound, your ladyship," responded Miss Minckes. Her eyes glittered with anticipated gratified revenge, at the thought of probing her mistress's wound.

"What did you think of the sermon?"

"Oh, one is always interested in the Curate's sermons. They are always intelligible and practical. Not like the old Rector's mumblings, who seems to try how obscure he can make his meaning, if he has any."

"But what do you think of this particular

sermon?"

"That is hardly a fair question, my lady. If I answer candidly, I shall offend you."

"Not in the least, Matilda. The novelty of a candid answer from you, would interest

and gratify me."

"Oh, very well, Lady Forrester; then I will say, I thought it a particularly good sermon—most eloquent—a rare specimen of pulpit eloquence. From beginning to end the interest never flagged. That pathetic story of the Indian king affected me to tears. Now, my lady, am I not candid?"

"Well, but was he not rather severe on papa and me? He included us among the rich and noble, whose gluttony and sports teach cruelty to the poor. You will say,

of course, if the cap fits we may wear it----"

"Say it! oh, no, your ladyship. I would never say anything so rude."

"Well, you think it, if you don't say it."
A malignant gleam of gratified revenge shot from Miss Minckes's eyes. But, owing to her obliquity of vision, she seemed to gaze at a portrait on the wall.

"And do you think it was wise in Mr. Weatherall to preach such a sermon?"

"Cela dépend!" said Miss Minckes quickly.
"They say the Church don't know what o'clock it is. That may be true in a general way. But I think the clergy are thoroughly wide awake to their own interests. know perfectly which side their bread is buttered on. Excuse the vulgarity of the proverb. I had not your ladyship's educational advantages."

"Then you think Mr. Weatherall did not decide to preach such a sermon rashly, or

without some personal motive?"

"I think he knew perfectly well what he

was about, your ladyship."

"Yet, he bears the character of being a very good, innocent, disinterested, straight-

forward young man."

"Yes, that's the character he bears. Wears his hat on the back of his head, and looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth. Pardon my plebeian style of speaking, your ladyship."

"You mean me to understand your penetration sees deeper. You don't think the Curate quite so simple as he looks?"

" Not I!"

Miss Minckes appeared to have forgot her usual reserve. Lady Honoria continued, as if thinking aloud:

"If I were to judge from common report, I would attribute Mr. Weatherall's sermon however personally objectionable to me as a hunting lady—to pure, earnest, simple-hearted Christian zeal; not exactly heedless, but hardly conscious, of giving offence. You called the sermon a model of pulpit eloquence, and said it affected you to tears. He seems to me a sort of Dominie Sampson, a Parson Adams, a privileged being. It would be foolish to be angry with him, or treat him like a responsible person—far less fancy he meant to be personal, and hurt my feelings, and those of the Earl."

"Yes, I know that's the general opinion," said Miss Minckes, tossing her head, and "cocking" her eye at the portrait; "but people may be mistaken."

"I wish you would speak out, Matilda. Do you think Mr. Weatherall is playing a secret game? That he calculated the effect of his sermon—dismissal from his curacy?"

"I think it extremely probable he did. What else could he expect? He would be what the Scotch call a natural, if he could

expect the aristocracy and gentry would for-

give and thank him, for such an exposure to their social inferiors, or that they would

tolerate a repetition of the insult."

"Why, you are quite frank, Matilda! Then, if I follow you, he has quite made up his mind to be dismissed from his curacy. But, so far from injuring, it will better his condition. The sermon will be published, get into the papers, recommend him for preferment, lift him above the ruck of the inferior clergy, and ultimately make his fortune."

"Your ladyship has exactly divined my thoughts, and clothed them in your usual

felicity of expression."

Lady Honoria was too pre-occupied with her train of thought, to notice the sneer at the slang expression which had escaped her. Or if she did notice it, she disregarded it, and continued:

"Ha! Then it would serve him right to disappoint him, and endeavour to defeat this Alnaschar dream."

"It would, indeed, my lady."

"If it could be done—but how? Such a sermon is sure to circulate. I rather fancy there was a reporter in church. And he may repeat the offence—unless—you think, by some means or other, the Reverend Mr. Weatherall might be induced to modify his strong prejudice against hunting, and other field-sports."

"Try him, my lady."

"You are personally acquainted with Mr. Weatherall, perhaps?"

"We have met, your ladyship," said Miss

Minckes, coldly.

"You expressed yourself warmly in his favour—"

"Only professionally, my lady, as a preacher. There can be no question about that. It is a pleasure to listen to him. The Rector always sends me to sleep."

"True; I understand. But in his private character, you don't think so highly of the

Curate, as most people do?"

"I think that, if it is worth your lady-ship's while to make the experiment, you will find the Curate just as malleable, as changeable, as fickle, and as hypocritical, as other clergymen, and men in general. I never knew a man worth two pence. That is, of course, speaking from my own experience, in my own walk of life. It may be quite different in good society."

"You are quite misanthropical, Miss

Minckes."

"I speak only of my own order—the people, your ladyship — poor scrofulous wretches, I think Dr. Johnson calls us. You can't expect to find the mens sana in corpore sano among plebeians. Of course, it is different with the aristocracy. There, you naturally expect to find pure morals, and irreproachable lives! The divorce cases in the papers, are only the exceptions which

prove the rule! Pardon me, your ladyship, for bringing such an unsavoury subject betwixt the wind, and your nobility. If you have no further need for me, I humbly take

my leave."

When she first entered her service, Lady Honoria thought Miss Minckes very imperfectly educated; as was, indeed, the fact. Gradually, the Companion began to interlard her speech, with little scraps of French, and even with Latin quotations, tolerably well pronounced, and with no glaring false quantities. Lady Honoria at first wondered, and concluded either that the had undervelved. concluded, either that she had undervalued Miss Minckes, or that she was really improving her education. Lady Honoria had too much good breeding to cross-question. Only once she chanced to observe she was not aware that Miss Minckes knew French and Latin. The Companion seemed a good deal confused at the remark. Had Lady Honoria known who the Tutor was, she might have had cause for uneasiness. But as these little pedantries added piquancy to Miss Minckes's habitual malevolence, Lady Honoria gave herself no further trouble about the matter.

CHAPTER V.

UNEXPECTED RESULTS OF THE CURATE'S SERMON.

LADY HONORIA had gained all the information she coveted. As it was not usual for Miss Minckes to permit herself to be "pumped," or to favour another's views, save for her own personal advantage, it is necessary to explain her reasons for disliking the man, whose sermons she so much admired. About two years before, Miss Minckes learned that Mr. Weatherall never went into ladies' society, and was reported to be a practical exponent of clerical celibacy. She thought it would be a feather in her cap, to carry him off in She therefore became a regular disgusted Mr. attendant at church. She Gnatstrainer and other Dissenters, (her previous co-religionists) by her praises of the new curate's preaching, and the delight she experienced in "sitting under him." To which Gnatstrainer brutally replied: "You are just fit to be sat upon, like the rest of your worthless sex." During the sermon, Miss Minckes kept her eye fixed on the Curate, as steadily as its roving tendency permitted. She knew cases of nervous young Curates being courted and caught in this way. But this manœuvre

did not avail. Whether the Curate's heart was steeled to the tender passion, or whether Miss Minckes' oblique glances never fairly encountered his, he showed neither consciousness nor confusion. Miss Minckes found it necessary to unmask another battery. She became suddenly an ardent volunteer for district-visiting. She and the Curate were continually meeting by chance, "the usual way," in the cottages of poor parishioners. By this means, she became personally acquainted with him, and her stratagem had a fair chance of success.

According to Thackeray: "Any woman without an absolute hump, may marry any man." Miss Minckes had a very good figure, and her features were regular. A cast in the eye is thought, by some people, to enhance beauty. The Curate resembled Parson Adams in this, that he never saw further into any one's designs, than they wished him to see. Accordingly, Mr. Weatherall took a natural interest in a young lady zealous in district-visiting. As they met almost daily, they became friends. Miss Minckes gave every opportunity for friendship to ripen into love. But some men are so distressingly bashful! The Curate was always frank, but never embarrassed, never tender. Even when left tête-à-tête accidentally, for half-anhour, he would go on prosing about parish matters, or local news, or the weather. His unfeeling conduct so provoked Miss

Minckes that, as she confessed to her confidant, she sometimes felt inclined to shake him! But she reflected that shaking a man, is not the best way to make him

propose.

The Curate never mentioned the word Love! Of that word he seemed as ignorant as French demoiselles educated in a Pension, where L'Amour is carefully blotted out of all books, music, &c., and Tambour, or some similarly sounding word substituted instead. It would be difficult to hit upon a plan better calculated to stimulate youthful female curiosity, to discover all about the mysterious and tabooed word! The patience of Miss Minckes was quite exhausted. She herself broached the subject, and hoped she had to congratulate him on the report that he was about to change his condition. Curate felt and looked sincerely astonished. Miss Minckes named, at a venture, the names of two or three young ladies which rumour connected with his own.

Mr. Weatherall strenuously denied matrimonial intentions, and wondered how such

reports got into circulation.

"Is it not wonderful?" said Miss Minckes.
"Do you know, to my very great annoyance, and confusion, village gossip has actually connected our names. Really, if people will talk so foolishly, I shall find it necessary to give up my district-visiting altogether."

The Curate started, and looked confused.

Miss Minckes followed up her attack, by complaining of the heat, and sudden indisposition.

"A glass of water, please. Oh! I feel so faint!"

Here she leaned her whole weight on the Curate. He, poor man, had no more suspicion of Miss Minckes, than my Uncle Toby had of Widow Wadman. The Curate did not behave as gallant men do on the stage, in real life, and in novels. He did not apostrophise the lady, and call her the loveliest of her sex. He did not ravish a chaste kiss. He did not even hold her in his arms, until old Dame Howlett had time to enter and catch them in this equivocal situation. In which case, the whole parish would have known the fact in twenty-four hours. And then the Curate might have been talked into a marriage. Or if he had remained obdurate, there was as good a case for an action as in "Bardell and Pickwick," and the Curate must have chosen either to marry, or pay a round sum in damages. Not in the least doubting the reality of the indisposition, the Curate deposited the fainting young lady on a chair, and hastened for a glass of water, which, in his agitation, he dashed full in her face. Probably to this day, Mr. Weatherall believes that the sudden recovery of the young lady was entirely due to his prompt action. Miss Minckes certainly did "come to" at once, with a very natural start, a bounce, and

an interjectional word, which sounded like "Fool!" She softened this down, by adding: "I am very foolish to be so nervous and hysterical; don't you think so?" "Not at all," said the Curate, truthfully. He thought she applied the word "Fool" to herself. She was certainly none. He little knew how narrowly he had escaped. Dame Howlett entered—too late! Miss Minckes took an abrupt leave. Her district-visiting ended from that day. The Curate never could understand why Miss Minckes was so cold towards him. In reality, she conceived that he had wilfully understood her advances, and mortified her pride. She hated him accordingly. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

That Sunday evening, Lady Honoria entered the dining-room, looking radiant. She and the Earl were tête-à-tête. After the servants had retired, her father showed her the letter. She read it, while he sipped his claret. She had purposely postponed the interview, that he might be in a better humour.

"Well, my love, what do you think of it?"

"I think it is a very intemperate letter, papa."

If she had spoken thus before dinner, the

Earl might have been obstinate.

He now said:

[&]quot;Shall I send it?"

"Will you leave it to me to decide, dear papa?"

"Humph! I suppose I must."

"Very well, papa."

The spoilt child tripped to the fire, and threw the letter into the flames.

"There, papa. You've relieved your feelings by writing it—have you not?"

"Upon my word, I have."

"Now then, you'll listen to reason."

"All very well, my love; but are we really to sit down under such a public exposure?"

"Pshaw, papa! Why be so thin-skinned?

He never mentioned our name."

"No; but he included us pretty plainly. I could see the Liberals and Radicals quite understood that. Suppose he should repeat the offence. I should have a fit, or perhaps forget myself, and brawl in church."

"You wish to punish Mr. Weatherall, and

hinder him from repeating the offence?"

"Certainly!"

"Shall I tell you how?"

"I shall be obliged."

"Ask him to dinner."

"Oh! now you are joking?"

"No, indeed, papa. I'm quite serious."

"What! ask him to dinner, as a reward

for insulting both of us!"

"Yes, papa, ask him to dinner, and leave the rest to me. I predict you will hear no more sermons of that kind, from Mr. Weatherall." "Oh! now I guess your object. You intend to take the young man to task——"
"Never mind what I intend, papa. You

- will know all in good time. But one immediate benefit will accrue to you from the dinner invitation."
 - "What's that?"
- "Listen, dear papa. Suppose you had sent that angry note, which you so considerately permitted me to burn. You might have gained your end. The Curate might have had to go. But the Rector would have been sulky to lose so good a Curate, who relieves him of all the hard, unpleasant parochial duty. The Rector's lady would have been cross. The whole parish would have resented the loss of a popular clergyman, and good preacher. Our political enemies, the Liberals and Radicals, would have made capital out of it, and our candidate, Mr. Stedfast, would probably lose his election."
 "I see—I see."
- "Well, papa, all those possibilities are now happily avoided. Now for what may become You invite Mr. Weatherall to realities. dinner. He accepts. In less than a week the parish is ringing with the magnanimity and Christian charity of the Earl of Laxing-ton, who returns benefits for insults. The Earl of Laxington might have persecuted the Curate. The Earl of Laxington not merely forgives, but rewards; heaps coals of fire upon the Curate's head. Stay, papa, I've not

quite finished. The election comes off. You go to the hustings, to support the Conservative candidate. You are more popular than ever. Even the Liberals and Radicals cheer you. Our candidate is returned by a large majority. You have scored another triumph. And when our party comes into power again, as it must some day, why, if the Earl of Laxington is ambitious, he may be in the Cabinet."

"Upon my life, my love, I am proud of you. I see it all. You have a head for combinations, and—well, I'm too old, I fear, for office."

"Too old, papa! Why you are only fiftyeight. Think how old Palmerston was, and he died in harness."

"That's it, my love. I don't want to live, or die, in harness. I prefer a sinecure to work. But never mind. Your scheme is splendid. It's sure to increase my popularity, and make the election safe."

"Yes, papa, I think we may reckon on that."

"And the Curate—what's-his-name?—after accepting our hospitality, will not like to preach so bitterly against Aristocratic sports again. Well, it's the best way, perhaps, although it's certainly letting the young man off too cheaply."

"Perhaps he's not to be altogether let off,

papa."

"Oh! I see; you do intend to scold

him. Well, he deserves it, but don't be too hard on the poor fellow, for, after all, if events turn out as you say, what's-his-name?—the Curate—has done me unconsciously a service."

"What, papa; you taking his part!"

"Well, I'll not be too hard on—what's-his-name."

"I hope, papa, if Mr. Weatherall does come to dinner, you will try and remember his name."

On Tuesday morning, a mounted groom, wearing the Earl's livery, rode up to the door of a pretty little cottage in Laxington. After inquiring if the Rev. Mr. Weatherall lived there, the man handed in a letters ealed with the Earl's crest. Mrs. Weatherall and her son were sitting at breakfast. From the parlour-window, they saw the mounted messenger trot up on a spirited horse. The unwonted event seemed ominous to mother and son. They recognised the Earl's livery. The horse was checked suddenly, with considerable noise. There was no occasion for the man to dismount and knock. The servant opened the door, went out, received, and returned with the letter. The servant had left the Still the letter lay unopened on the table. The Curate said:

"Mother, I fear yonder letter contains my dismissal."

"Your dismissal indeed! You are not a servant."

"Call it what you like. It is my order to depart, I fear."

"But why should it come from the Earl,

and not from the Rector of Laxington?"

- "I can guess how that is. Mr. Headlong has called on the Earl. They have come to an understanding. The Rector has complied with the Earl's request, and has at once written the letter of dismissal, to be despatched by the Earl's groom. I was prepared for this, Mr. Headlong told me he must do it."
- "If it be so, each has acted a mean and shabby part—aye, and more than that."

"What more, dear mother?"

"Why I must say it. It is a disgrace to the National Church, that such high-handed things can be done. That you, a Curate, can be suddenly turned off, like a dishonest servant, for no ecclesiastical, or moral fault, but simply for preaching according to conscience. I'm sure I don't wonder at people turning Dissenters."

"Don't take it so to heart, dear mother."

"Open the letter, and let us know the worst."

From the manner in which the Curate approached the letter, one might imagine he thought it contained explosive material, as in modern advanced days of Reform and Dynamite. He lifted the envelope tenderly, and broke the seal, as if it burned his fingers.

As he read, his face exhibited signs of astonishment.

"For goodness' sake, William, don't sit glowering there, with your eyes like saucers. It's no use handing me the letter, I cannot see without my glasses."

The Curate read aloud:

"The Earl of Laxington presents his compliments to the Rev. Mr. Weatherall." Here the Curate paused, as if he found a word difficult to decipher. "A very civil commencement," thought Mrs. Weatherall. Then her imagination pieced out the contents thus: "And requests to know the meaning of his extraordinary and uncalled-for remarks on Sunday morning." The Curate finished the letter, which ran thus: "and begs the favour of his company at a family dinner, on Thursday next."

The mother's astonishment equalled—it could not exceed—that of her son.

"Have you read yon letter correctly, William?"

"Satisfy yourself, mother."

Mrs. Weatherall got her spectacles, adjusted them, and read the letter more than once. It was no deception. There could be no mistake. It was no trick.

Mother and son proceeded with their breakfast, discussing the new posture of affairs. It was a great relief to both, that they were not to leave Laxington. They had

become attached to the place. To leave it under such peculiar circumstances, would have given additional pain to removal. They agreed that the Earl was not so haughty and uncharitable, as they, with others, had supposed him. For to the simple pair, it was clear that the invitation showed a good heart. The Earl had evidently determined to show his respect for the Cloth, and for the Curate's manly independence, in preaching so boldly against Field-sports. Were they so very simple in coming to this conclusion? Could the most long-headed person, who did not know the facts, come to any other? On reflection, the old lady's pride felt hurt at the want of ceremony, in this short invitation from the Earl, without a previous visit to the man whom he did not personally know; and the slight to herself, in not including her in the invitation. But this feeling soon passed away. It was forgotten in her sympathy for her son's good fortune. For, with such grand friends, he might attain to a bishopric. She reminded "William" that the letter must be acknowledged. A dinner was not like an evening invitation. A guest more or less, made a difference in preparations, as she knew from experience. And the note said a family dinner.

Accordingly, the Curate sallied out to the stationer's, and bought a whole quire of the best cream-laid. Unheard-of extravagance! The humble man had always hitherto used

fourpenny note-paper, and purchased it by the half-quire. He then retired to his study, and spoilt half-a-dozen sheets, before he succeeded in penning a note to his own, and his mother's satisfaction.

"Rev. Mr. Weatherall presents his respects to the Earl of Laxington, and will do himself the honour of waiting on his Grace on Thursday."

The worthy lady had her own secret misgivings whether the word "Grace" was properly applied to an Earl, but thought it a pity to give her son the trouble of adding another sheet of note-paper to his list of failures. Even after the letter was written, folded, enveloped and addressed, the Curate seemed to hesitate about sending it.

"After all, mother," said he, "would it not be better to destroy this note, and write another, civilly declining the invitation?" Then he added, as if in soliloquy, "Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes." Little did he then

suspect how apt the quotation was!

"What's that you're muttering about the time, William? Decline the invitation! That would be very foolish. Why would you decline?"

"I am thinking, mother, there is something suspicious (uncanny, as the Scotch say) about this unexpected invitation."

"How so?"

"Well, you see, dear mother, considering the difference in rank between the Earl and myself——" "William, I won't hear you disparage yourself. A man can be no more than a Christian gentleman. As a preacher of the Gospel, an ordained minister of the Church of England, you are quite fit to associate with the Earl."

"I know, mother, that's the theory, but in practice, a poor curate is far beneath a nobleman. The Earl of Laxington has never acknowledged my existence before to-day. Am I to believe that he has suddenly taken a fancy to make my acquaintance, merely because I preached a sermon reflecting severely on his Order, for setting a bad example of cruelty to animals?"

"You don't put it exactly in the right way. God may have blessed the Word! Your sermon may have awakened the Earl's conscience. He may wish to converse with you on the subject. You may even influence him to give up hunting—who knows?"

Here was a grand idea, that the Curate was going into fashionable Society, as a humane

missionary.

"Mother, your partiality for me is calculated to puff me up."

"It need not; but you, William, think too humbly of yourself. There is nothing very wonderful in an Earl asking his parish curate to dine with him. Considering your gift in expounding, the wonder is he did not ask you before. Paul writes to Timothy, 'Let no man despise thee."

"Well, mother, perhaps pride has to do with my objections to accept; and the worst, most insidious kind of pride—that which apes humility. For while stating my honest convictions of the great social distinction between the Earl and myself, a poor curate, I am conscious of standing on my own personal dignity, because the Earl did not call, or at least send his card, before the invitation."

Mrs. Weatherall laughed, and said, "That

is pride."

"I think, mother, I can excuse all short-comings as to myself, but surely the invitation should have included you."

Mrs. Weatherall would have been pleased if it had done so, but she replied quickly:

"And do you think I would have gone, to make my antiquated dress and manners a fund of mirth for fine ladies and gentlemen?"

"If you think they would treat you so, I cannot, I ought not, to accept the invitation."

- "You mistake me, William, I don't for a moment think that ladies and gentlemen would be so rude as to ridicule me to my face; but they could not help noticing all my peculiarities; and it is not pleasant to think of being laughed at, and quizzed behind one's back. Their world is not mine——"
- "Ah, mother! you unconsciously argue against my going."

"How so?"

- "Is their world mine?"
- "It is, and it is not."

"You are enigmatical."

"I mean, that though, as a clergyman, you must be more strict than the laity, yet that it would be wrong in the clergy never to mix with the world, never to go into Society, or know people of rank and fashion. It is your duty to go, or otherwise the great ones of the earth might be tempted to forget God altogether. You are not a monk. A little change will do you good. Besides, you are young, and have to make your way in the world. Why not make the Earl your friend, if he wishes to be so? Depend on it, if you refuse this invitation, you will never get another from him. And what is more, the Earl will think that you mistrust, or despise, his civility, and reckon you as one of his personal, or political enemies. A parish minister cannot afford to make enemies in any station!"

One can guess how the matter ended. The Curate (a dutiful son) took his mother's advice, only too pleased to be advised to do what inclination prompted. He went out and posted the letter. On his way home, he remembered that, owing to the excitement and mental confusion, he had not brought the question to the decision of private prayer. This distressed him. He wished he had not posted the letter. He even returned to the office, and asked to have the letter returned. The postmaster explained, that a letter, once mailed, is the property of Her Majesty, and

that, if he let it out of his hands, he was liable to a penalty of £20! Possibly it did not occur to the Curate, that he could write another note, cancelling his acceptance of the invitation. Or, he did not like to seem capricious, and to write a white lie. He resolved to go, in spite of all misgivings. "And why," thinks some critical reader, "all these minute details about such a trifle? Why not say, once for all, that the Curate determined to go?" Because his decision was not a triffe. Because his acceptance of this invitation formed a grand turning-point in his destiny. Because, if he had taken more time to reflect, and had prayed for guidance, he might have rejected the invitation. Because, had he possessed the gift of second sight, he might have been tempted to decline. Although, had that vision of the future been sufficiently clear and extended, he might still have ventured to accept. Finally, because, in this respect, the Author must be a better judge than the critical reader, however intelligent, who cannot possibly know how this incident bears on the farther development of the story!

There was no time to order new clothes—another source of anxiety for mother and son. They were not in London, where a readymade suit can be had, at a fifth of a tailor's price, and often a better fit. The purchaser of ready-made clothes, avoids loss of time, and loss of temper. For it requires a good share

of philosophy, to tolerate some of those genial professional criticisms so frankly tendered—
"No chest, sir," said Mr. Snip to a customer, whose thorax did not come up to the proper standard. The Curate's wardrobe was not so deficient as that of Parson Adams, who excused his ragged cassock, by stating that he had the misfortune to tear it ten years ago! Yet, laudable economy, or, rather, his liberality to the poor, had prevented the Curate from complying with his mother's request, to get a new black suit in the autumn. Consequently, though not exactly shabby, his habilaments showed signs of wear. However, they were well brushed, and the seams well inked. The Curate actually astonished his mother, by going to the unheard-of expense of a pot of pomatum, a bottle of the most fashionable scent, and hair-oil. He had indulged in such luxuries before, but, as a rule, they had remained, through absence of mind, forgotten and unused, till they became rancid. The Curate's moustache and beard, dark, glossy, brown and luxuriant, had formed the great attraction for Miss Minckes. The Curate wore these natural growths, not from coxcombry, but to save the time and trouble of shaving, and to protect his teeth, throat and lungs, from the inclemency of the weather, which he braved at all seasons and at all hours. Whereas, the Rector (being a delicate creature, weighing only eighteen stone) carefully avoided night air!

The articles required for the Curate's toilet, were sold at the post-office, a sort of general shop for perfumery, stationery, &c. The saleswoman was Miss Gnatstrainer, eldest saleswoman was Miss Gnatstrainer, eldest daughter of the grocer, a very comely girl. Some gossips wondered that a tradesman so rich as Mr. Gnatstrainer, would permit his daughter to stand behind a counter. He said he did not bring up his children to lollop through life as fine ladies, but to get an honest living. The young lady at first considered it infra dignitatem, but ended by liking the situation. The shopkeeper found it to his interest, to employ her at a fair salary, as she attracted customers. She was fairly educated, with manners superior to her situation. Being a showy girl, with high spirits, she greatly enjoyed her opportunities of innocent flirtation. The young men of Laxington had given her the harmless nickname of "Blink Bonny." Such was the damsel, who now tried to tempt the Curate into purchasing a small bottle of "Pommade pour glisser les moustaches." The Curate (a far better Latin, than French scholar) desired far better Latin, than French scholar) desired an explanation. "Blink Bonny" seemed more than professionally interested in the Curate's beard and moustache. She explained that the Pommade was to fix the moustache, "and draw out the ends into two long points, like shoemakers' waxed-ends, or rats' tails, like the Emperor of the French!" The Curate was sorely tempted to adopt this worldly fashion.

But, on reflection, rejected the idea as unclerical. What would people say, if he appeared on the High Street, with a moustache à l'Empereur. Miss Straitlace and all his strict parishioners would give him over at once, as one going headlong to destruction. He would not have a shred of character left. Yet, if he could have known it! He was destined to buy that identical pot of Pommade, and to take a pride in fixing his moustache, and that before the lapse of many weeks. His downward course had commenced. But Juvenal is right: "Nemo repente fuit turpissimus."

At present, Miss Gnatstrainer, alias "Blink Bonny," displayed this article of the toilet in vain. Incidentally, however, she gave him much valuable information. The Curate learned for the first time, that there were two kinds of Pommade, one white, the other

black.

"Which do gentlemen generally prefer?"
"Well, sir, it's a matter of taste. Gentle-

men with light moustaches, prefer white; gentlemen with dark moustaches, prefer black."

"And which do ladies generally prefer? Which do you yourself prefer?" asked the Curate with unconscious gallantry.

With the irreverent, the Curate's nick-name was "Sobersides." Yet here he was actually talking tete-à-tete with "Blink Bonny," in full view of passers-by in the High Street! No wonder if Miss Gnatstrainer was in unusually high spirits, and did her "level best" to give the conversation the appearance of a flirtation. She shook her luxuriant curls, and said archly: "Ladies generally, especially young ladies, like the light Pommade. I know I do!"

"May I ask why?" said the Curate, inspired with a laudable love of knowledge.

"Blink Bonny" darted a wicked glance from her black eyes, which showed the aptness of her nick-name (after the filly which won the Derby in 1857), and said with an irrepressible giggle: "Because the white don't come off, and the black does."

"Still I am in the dark. Oh! I see—the black dye comes off on gentlemen's white

pocket-handkerchiefs."

"Yes, and on other things, too, besides handkerchiefs, belonging to ladies, sometimes!"

The giggle had now developed into a smile, or rather laugh, which showed Blink Bonny's white teeth. The Curate had not the slightest idea of the joke. He looked so astonished, that Miss Gnatstrainer enlightened him.

"Excuse me making so free, Mr. Weatherall, but I don't think you quite twig."

" Twig?"

"Beg pardon, sir, excuse my slang, but really I hear so much of it from young gentlemen—and young ladies too, for that matter—that I pick it up unconsciously. I mean you don't quite take."

"Take?"

"You don't quite understand my meaning."

"Indeed I do not, Miss Gnatstrainer."

"Well sir, suppose this coming Christmas, a gentleman surprised a lady under the mistletoe, and—you know, sir—well sir, if the gent wore moustaches, and used black pommade, it's just possible there might be a black stain on the lady's lips! You understand now, sir?"

"I think I do." The Curate had never kissed any woman but his mother! He blushed, but joined in the laugh, nevertheless.

The Curate's former humdrum simple life is drawing rapidly to its close. On Thursday, he is to enter fashionable society. He has appeared in the character of a grub—will he appear in that of a butterfly? To learn that, we must begin a new Chapter, and a new Book. I cannot more appropriately mark the vast change in the character and fortunes of my hero—The Curate!

BOOK SECOND.

THE CURATE IN SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

KETTLEDRUM.

"Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort
To taste awhile the pleasures of a court.
In various talk the instructive hours they pass'd—
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last.
One speaks the glory of the British queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes.
At every word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that."
—POPE.

Examining more closely the note of invitation, Mr. Weatherall discovered a P.T.O., and turning the leaf, read this P.S., "As it may be inconvenient returning home late, the Earl hopes Mr. Weatherall will take a bed at Laxington House." Mrs. Weatherall did not relish the idea of her son trudging home a long distance, on a dark November night. He would, of course, go in a "fly." But the

extra expense of returning late in that vehicle, would have been a serious item. By remaining all night at Laxington House, he saved this, and was not exposed to the night air. The worthy lady was quite pleased with the forethought and consideration of the Earl. The Curate at first objected to the arrangement, and said he thought nothing of walking home. But his mother urged him so strongly not to "mortify the Earl, by refusing so kind an offer," that "William" at last consented to relieve her anxiety.

Another source of perplexity, was the hour at which he was expected. This was not specified in the note of invitation. Mrs. Weatherall opined that as the invitation was so short, and said a family dinner, it must be early. Her idea of an early dinner, was their own regular hour, one o'clock. But she made a concession for the prejudices of fashion.

"Let me see. The Earl will dine late in general, say five o'clock. Therefore a family

dinner would be at three, or four."

"But," said the Curate, "the Rector dines at six, or later. After all, call our meals by what names we choose, rich and poor really keep the same hours."

"What do you mean, William?"

"Why, they both breakfast about eight, and dine at one; only the rich man calls it luncheon. They take supper about seven, though the rich man calls it dinner."

"I never thought of that."
"Extremes meet. Suppose we compromise the matter, by ordering the fly for four o'clock. I shall get to Laxington House

about half-past."

"Be it so, and if you find they have dined, you can just explain your mistake; and I have no doubt Lady Honoria will order the butler to set down some solid dish for you at the tea-table."

"I should never dream of giving that extra trouble. I must just take my chance." "Well, William, there was the more reason

for you to make a good lunch or dinner. It seemed to me you trifled with the dishes."

This was true. The Curate felt too nervous

to eat, though he had gone through the ceremony of dinner at one.

"And, if you should find they have dined, you must just make up for missing your dinner at supper. For if they dine early, they are likely to have a substantial hot supper."

"Of which, if I were to partake just before going to bed, I should probably have the nightmare. But be at ease, mother, I shall not starve, whether in time for dinner, or

not."

The Curate was ready dressed, and waiting, a good hour before the punctual arrival of the "fly." Mrs. Weatherall passed the time in admiring her son, surveying his dress, and caressing his white tie, so as to make it sit

more elegantly. The worthy lady likewise drew drafts upon her memory, for pictures of Society as she personally knew it, thirty years before. She deduced therefrom, practical instructions for her son on this, his first entrance into the fashionable world. Their practical value may be surmised by

the following example:

"When I was in Society, well-bred people took wine with each other. Such a friendly custom is, no doubt, still fashionable. I know no reason why it should be otherwise. So mind, William, and watch the Earl's eye at dinner. He will probably take wine with you during the first or second course, to show that he bears you no ill-will for the sermon. And it will be your duty, when you have an opportunity, to pay the same compliment to Lady Honoria."

"I shall feel dreadfully nervous."

"You have nothing to do, but catch the lady's eye, and say: "May I have the honour," at the same time raising your own wine-glass. Ladies never ask gentlemen to take wine, though always ready to respond. Some ladies I know were only too ready. Where have I heard, or read, that at a dinner-party in Iroland, you could not look at a lady.

where have I heard, or read, that at a dinner-party in Ireland, you could not look at a lady without her saying: 'Port, if you plaze?'"

The Curate seemed too much pre-occupied with his own thoughts to profit by the lecture on etiquette. He fidgetted with his white kid gloves, drew out his watch every five minutes,

and once he astonished his mother, by saying, as if in soliloquy:—"I can't shake off this misgiving. After all, it is not too late to give the thing up."

"Gracious, William! are you crazy? Not go—and you dressed—and the fly ordered and—Here it comes, I declare! Not go,

indeed!"

"I am very foolish, my dear mother. Kiss me, and bless me!"

The Curate got into the vehicle. His fond mother saw it drive off, and thought, "Some day, perhaps, he will have his own carriage." There was no selfishness in her wish. She coveted success, not for herself, but for her son. Yet not her only son; she had another—a hard, practical, bustling, money-making man of the world—the very antipodes of "The Curate."

The "fly" jingled on, carrying "William" and his fortunes. It jingled through the High Street of Laxington, to the chief entrance to the Park, and there stopped, till one of the lodge-keeper's children came out, opened the gate, received a penny, and bobbed to the Curate. The "fly" proceeded through the noble park. It was well stocked with deer, both Fallow and Red. As the herd gazed at him, it was a fancy of the Curate, that they snuffed the tainted gale, tossed their heads, and turned up their aristocratic noses at the humble vehicle (or more probably, at the horse) which thus ventured to intrude upon their sylvan

solitude! The "fly" passed the pretty ornamental bridge spanning the trout-stream which fed the beautiful lake opening out into the valley, and reflecting the after-glow of the Western horizon. At length the "fly" drew up before the outer gate of the mansion.

Laxington House might well be called a castle. It was a grand pile of building in the Tudor style. The house, stables, offices, and gardens formed a spacious parallelogram of some forty acres, surrounded by a stout and lofty wall, in some places defended by a moat. The gardens and pleasure-grounds constituted a park, within a park. The Curate knew something of the family's history. As he gazed something of the family's history. As he gazed on the front of the mansion, and the two lofty on the front of the mansion, and the two lofty embattled towers which guard the gate of entrance in the middle, he thought of how many centuries they had stood. Not of yesterday, like the brand new building of the parvenu. Nor is our Aristocracy a mushroom, but took time to grow. In this, resembling the sturdy oaks of the park. As the cumbrous gate swung open to admit his literally "one-horse" vehicle into the court-yard, the Curate experienced a strange sensation, not of awe exactly, but of gloom, mingled with apprehension. He alighted, paid his driver, and was admitted. One footman took his hat, great coat, gloves, and stick. Another footman great coat, gloves, and stick. Another footman conducted him across the Hall, and along a corridor, opened a drawing-room door, announced his name in a loud voice, and departed; leaving the most bashful of men "the observed of all observers!"

The sudden change from a dark November evening without, to a brilliantly lighted apartment, is sufficiently bewildering. The Curate was completely dazed. Had the footman left the door open, Mr. Weatherall would probably have fled. But to open that door, was an act of boldness of which he was incapable. He looked down. He was standing on a real Turkey carpet. He looked up at the lofty ceiling, from which depended an immense chandelier, shedding a flood of mellow light throughout the apartment, a spacious oblong salon. The walls in white, with gilded cornices, were decorated in the Louis Quatorze style, with furniture to match; the chairs, sofas, etc., being upholstered in pale blue satin. Never had the Curate been in such a splendid room, as far surpassing the Rector's drawing-room, as that apartment surpassed Mrs. Weatherall's best sitting-room. Folding doors at the further end were closed, otherwise the scene represented what Mr. Swiveller calls "the halls of dazzling light." The company naturally suspended their conversation at the announcement, and gazed at the new-comer, who seemed so backward in coming for-This circumstance added to the Curate's embarrassment. He formed the sole object of observation, to a party of fashionable ladies and gentlemen. Few situations are more calculated to try presence of mind.

Many brave men would prefer "a forlorn hope."

Judging by his sensations, the Curate had stood thus at least a quarter of an hour!-by the clock not quite a minute!—when a vision of beauty detached itself from the group. In plain words, a tall and very lovely lady advanced a few paces, courtesied profoundly, and said:

"Permit me to introduce myself. I shall have great pleasure in making you acquainted with my friends. But first, pray take some tea or coffee. So kind of you to come early."

"This invitation was most welcome to the Curate. Not that he felt the need of refreshment, but it would afford some refuge to him in his nervous state. He looked round. How gladly would he have sheltered himself at, or even under, a large tea-table. But there was nothing of the sort. No "bubbling and loud-hissing urn," no wheeling of the sofa round a cosy tea-table. "The cups that cheer and not inebriate" did indeed wait on each. The company were drinking tea and coffee. That was certain, but not in the old-fashioned way in which he enjoyed that pleasant refreshment. As the company partook of it, it could not be called a meal at all. Two footmen carried round trays, with beautiful china cups already filled with tea and coffee. Another footman followed, with a tray containing various kinds of cake. and bread-and-butter, in thin, Vauxhall slices.

The Curate had never before assisted at a fashionable soirée. He never read novels. Consequently, he knew nothing of that delightful approximation of patrician to plebeian customs—then recently introduced—five o'clock tea! In his confused state, at the novelty of his "surroundings," he fell into a natural error. Tea and coffee he had always associated with after dinner. Consequently, he jumped to the conclusion, that the company had already dined. Yes; he thought he now thoroughly understood the situation. The family dinner had taken place at three o'clock. And Lady Honoria in saying: "So kind of you to come early," was really bantering him for being late.

The Curate addressed himself to the teatray, helped himself to milk and sugar, let the sugar-tongs fall, and in attempting to pick up that article, spilt half the contents of a cup, but met with no further accident. Just then,

Lady Honoria again addressed him:

"How do you like kettledrumming, Mr. Weatherall?"

The Curate did not in the least understand the question. The word "kettledrum" was as new to him as the practice. He fancied that he had been asked to hand the tea-kettle. He looked round the room. It contained two open fire-places, with fires in both, but no kettle. There were no tea-table, no presiding tea-maker. He must have been mistaken. He must answer. He did not like to confess

his ignorance, to put Lady Honoria to the trouble of repeating her question, or giving an explanation. So, by way of answering easily, like a man of the world, he said:

Thanks, Madam—Miss—I mean your lady-ship—the tea is excellent. I quite understood your allusion to coming early. But the invitation specified no hour. I beg to apologise for coming so late. But I hope you did not wait dinner for me."

Lady Honoria bit her lips. One or two ladies smiled. One gentleman put his hand over his mouth. Another was taken with a fit of coughing. A faint titter was heard. The Curate was quite at a loss to account for this. Lady Honoria glanced severely round the circle. The laughing culprit became at once perternaturally solemn. Then she said sweetly:

"As Toots says, 'It's of no consequence,' Mr. Weatherall. I beg to assure you we did not wait dinner!"

Satisfied on this point, the Curate sought to indemnify himself for the supposed loss of his dinner by a vigorous attack on the breadand-butter. Had he seen any muffins, he would have worried them too. In their absence, he fell back on the cake. In the process of appeasing his appetite, he had the misfortune to push from off the tray a china cup. It fell, and shattered, not into "a thousand pieces," as Smollet and the old novelists

write, but into several pieces. The Curate began immediately to apologise.

"Oh! I am so sorry— "Pray don't mention it."

"You are very kind, Madam—Miss—your ladyship, but I know the loss of one cup spoils the set."

"It is nothing. Pray don't trouble yourself about such a trifle."

"I see you forgive me, Lady Honoria, but really I cannot forgive myself. My dear mother is very fond of china. And even she, the best of women, would scold me if I broke one of her set."

"It can be mended; the pieces cleverly cemented, so as not to show the fracture.

Think no more about it."

"Oh! your ladyship is too kind." Profoundly touched by such good nature, the Curate added, as if partly thinking aloud:

"I never before had the good fortune to

see Pope's line personified."

"Pope's line. You excite my curiosity. Were it Tennyson, now, I should be au fait. But I am not read in Pope. He was an old bachelor, and rather prejudiced against our sex, I believe?"

"And yet he describes a perfect woman, and a thorough test of good temper in this

one line:

"'And mistress of herself, though china fall!'"

Lady Honoria looked surprised, and

pleased. She knew the Curate was a clever man, but gave him no credit for ready wit. The man whose awkwardness made him a spectacle to the company, had so far recovered himself, as to draw from the result of his own clumsiness, a pretty, practical compliment to the lady of the house. For a very brief period, perhaps, Lady Honoria wavered in her intentions against her simplemended victim. Perhaps not!

As opportunity occurred, Lady Honoria introduced the Curate to her guests. She mentioned several names which the Curate almost immediately afterwards forgot. Lady Ogle, Mrs. Rippington, Miss Heartfree, Miss Wildgoose, Lord Oddfish, Mr. Stedfast, Captain Rasper. Papa will join us at—by-and-bye. Apropos, Captain Rasper, what think you of my idea of a new sensation for next season?"

- "Why that it's bound to succeed, if your ladyship is trainer and runner. Pray what is it?"
- "A Rational Costume ball. Ha, ladies, I thought that would interest you. My general principles are—First: Distinct recognition of sex in costume——"

Miss Wildgoose, an old young lady, interrupted, without ceremony:

"There, Lady Forrester, I'm sorry to say I

differ from you in toto."

"What's that about toes, Miss Wildgoose," said Lord Oddfish, waggishly. "You know

I'm a martyr to gout. If you have any remedy——"

"I have a remedy, my lord, but you won't take it."

"Try me."

"Live upon sixpence a day, and earn it."

"Had you there, rather! Oddfish," said Captain Rasper.

Miss Wildgoose having silenced the enemy,

proceeded:

"I was about to observe, when so politely

interrupted——"

"Pardon me, Miss Wildgoose," said Lady Honoria; "but do you dislike being interrupted?"

"I mortally detest it."

- "So do I," said Lady Honoria drily; and with a comical glance, not lost on the company. "But pray proceed. You were about to observe——"
- "That there is far too much distinction between the two sexes of Man already. This will disappear when our Movement for Women shall have sufficiently educated them, and their oppressors."

Lord Oddfish, a portly Adonis of fifty,

again struck in:

"Do I understand you, Miss Wildgoose, to state that your Movement for Women has for its object the complete disappearance of Sex altogether?"

"You may laugh, my lord, but all the best

heads of the day are with us."

"I am not sufficiently educated yet, I

suppose?"

"Not on this subject, my lord, or you would have known that our Movement for Women has passed far beyond the stage for ridicule."

"There may be two opinions on that point, Madam. 'O wad some power the giftie gie us, To see ourselves as others see us.'"

"Oh, my lord, it is impossible to prevent fools from laughing. Solomon says 'A fool's bolt is soon shot.' But the time is coming when triflers like your lordship——"
Holding up both hands with a comical

gesture of self-defence, Lord Oddfish

exclaimed:

"Pray spare me. I cave in. I dry up, as Jonathan says. 'Defend me from the thing I fairly hate, A duel in the form of a debate."

"This little digression has interrupted our

hostess," said Mr. Stedfast.

Lady Honoria resumed: "Principle Second. Desire of each sex to please the other. I see Miss Wildgoose shakes her head. That

principle does not please her."

"No, indeed," said Miss Wildgoose, plumply. I say what I mean. I have no desire to please the other sex. No rightthinking woman should have any such desire."

Lady Honoria continued; "Principle No. Three. Health! You have nothing to say against that, Miss Wildgoose?" "Nothing! Our modern women—poor, wasp-waisted, mentally and physically undeveloped, creatures, stand much in need of health and strength, to enable them to hold their own, in the mortal struggle with their tyrant, man."

"I proceed then to Principle Four. Modesty. What, Miss Wildgoose, shaking your head again? You can't object to

Modesty."

"Most decidedly, if Modesty is held to be peculiarly the attribute of one sex alone. Why should women be more modest than men? Are we women never to hear the last of Modesty? A good deal more self-assertion would do us no harm. I know women sadly deficient in self-assertion."

"And I know women who have plenty, and

to spare!"

Miss Wildgoose glared at the speaker, Lord Oddfish.

Lady Honoria proceeded: "Principle Five. Comfort. Principle Six. Common Sense. Principle Seven. Taste. Principle Eight.

Beauty."

Miss Wildgoose objected: "I don't see what women want with Beauty. It is only skin-deep, a delusion, and a snare, tempting men to delude women with the false coin of flattery and compliment, to rob them of their rights and privileges. I go in for perfect equality"

Lady Honoria proceeded:

"Principle Nine. Grace. Principle Ten. Ease of motion. Such are my general principles, common to costume of both sexes. Ladies should follow reigning fashions only so far as they do not violate these General Principles. It should be as ridiculous for women to copy male, as for men to copy female fashions. It ought to be as absurd and disgraceful for women to talk of "my tailor," as for men to say "my milliner." What do we see? Fashionable women wearing curate's collars, coat-tails to their dresses, Newmarket coats, and gentlemen's hats, Wellington boots, and many more masculine articles of attire!"

"Quite right, too!" cried Miss Wildgoose, who never could remain long silent. "All these help on Our Movement. If I had my way, I would obliterate all distinctions in costume. In spite of recent improvements, women's dress is at present what it always has been, a distinctive mark of her slavery and subjection to man."

"What, ma'am, would you really have woman copy the costume of her so-called tyrant?"

"Certainly, if she wishes it. We have had

too much of vested rights."

"Surely man has a vested right in his own costume—for example, in his vest and——Come now, Miss Wildgoose, should a woman wear everything man wears?"

"Everything I thought becoming. I would sweep away all absurd distinctions, both of

dress, occupation, and privileges. Shelley asks ·

"Can man be free, if woman be a slave?"

I would make earth a paradise."

"To be consistent, you should advocate the exceedingly simple costume of our first parents in Paradise. Your views remind me of that American lady, who lectured the other day in London, Doctor Melissa Mangleman. Perhaps (as you are fond of lions and lionesses) you heard her, Lady Honoria?"

"I had not that pleasure," said Lady Honoria. "But I certainly shall go to hear

her in London next season."

"I believe she has returned to America, or, as she pronounces it, to Ammurica. But Rasper here, can imitate to perfection, her Yankee drawl."

"Pray let us hear."

Lady Honoria's request was seconded by all the ladies, except Miss Wildgoose.

"Well, ladies," said Captain Rasper, "I'll do my best to amuse you, but as I'm to imitate a woman, you must allow me to make up, and appear in character."

"Oh, by all means. That will make it more

amusing."

Sundry articles of female apparel being placed at the gallant officer's service, he (to the Curate's great astonishment) vanished behind a screen, and in a few minutes reappeared in lady's costume, with a large fan,

and standing behind a loo-table, delivered in an admirable falsetto voice, and with appropriate gestures, the following burlesque synopsis of a lecture by

Dr. Melissa Mangleman, on Woman's Rights!

"I say darn Equality! I guess, on our side the herring-pond, we air a considerable sight beyond Equality. That's a played-out, one-horse idear. Our platform is Woman superior to Man! Do you want to know for why? From greater complexity of physical organization! There's an answer, slick, and no mistake! I sould say more that this and in the last thing and the last thing and in the last thing and the last th take! I could say more, but this audience is mixed. I spare the modesty of the male sex—poor dears! I should be raal sorry to make 'em blush. You men are reckoned so much cleverer than uz poor women. Answer that! I guess all you played-out, one-horse male tyrants will have to clear out. Woman is merciful. Best not rile her. The resources of civilization air open to her, as well as man. She might pison her opponents. Man has got to cave in somehow. Better do it peaceably. Woman is bound to rule. But $Ha\ddot{o}w$? (How?). Some says, 'Strike agin marriage, till women git their Rights.' That ain't half a bad idear, if women would cotton to it. But you can't educate them up to it. They're 'most mad upon Orange blossoms. I say No! Marry fust, and then strike at home! Tame, lame, and vivisect men. Learn husbands to obey their wives-What do I hear? Some

rude man says, Wives promise to obey their husbands! The more shame for promising, and keeping their promises. Only raal mean, weak-minded wives betray their sex, and Cause, by obeying their husbands. Another man says, We air revolutionary. Thanks, mister, for the compliment. I guess we air revolutionary—some! I accept the mortal struggle. I, a representative woman, speaking for my sex, throw down the guntlet! I defy man, steeped in gross sensuality, stupefied with alcohol and tobacco. I quite agree with Soloman, 'Man is a beast,' and no mistake. Keep him under, give him particular fits, my sisters! This here's the truth of woman, accordin' to Eliza Farnham and me, Melissa Mangleman. 'What man is to the gorilla, woman is to man.' Man my master, indeed! Why I regard man as only an animated door-mat for women to wipe their feet on. Man, a slave to work for woman! Won't we just have a time, gurls! Woman fit for anythink, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter! Down with the last aristocracy of sex! With man, falls kingcraft, priestcraft, statecraft; all female shackles air busted. Man in his proper place, in the mud, ends the monotonous. monstrous monopoly of male Man in his proper place, in the mud, ends the monotonous, monstrous monopoly of male costume! To do male work, women must wear male clothes; woman mounting the top rung of the social ladder, and proclaiming from her moral platform, 'Mixed classes in Medicine! Free Love! Woman reigning over man, restraining, governing, punishing him for his own good. Woman in the jury-box, at the hustings, and polling-booth, in Parliament, in the Senate, in Office, in the Cabinet; woman in Army and Navy; woman in the best berths; woman doing whatever she has a mind to, and making man do whatever he hasn't a mind to. Guess its our turn now. Woman perfectly free. Man enslaved. Woman loving, acting, and dressing like man. Woman no longer timid and shame-faced, but thinking and saying what she pleases, and wearing everythink that man wears, from head to foot, from chimney-pot to—knickerbockers!"

The comical rendering of this absurd speech, the captain's clever falsetto mimicry of the platform lady's high pitched voice, rising occasionally to a shrill scream, the peculiar nasal drawl; above all, his caricature of female attitudes, manners, and gestures, were so excessively droll, that the company were convulsed with laughter. There was only one exception. Miss Wildgoose maintained her gravity, though with occasional contortions of feature, as though with difficulty restraining a smile. She glared through her spectacles, at Captain Rasper, as though she possessed, or coveted, Medusa's power to turn him into stone. Although unable, for a time, to resist the risible contagion, the Curate was pained with the visible distress of Miss Wildgoose. As a real

Christian, the Curate was the best bred person present. He had not been long enough in good society, to find pleasure in another's pain. He thought Lady Honoria somewhat deficient in politeness, in countenancing an exhibition which had the air of a practical joke. Obeying the charitable impulse, he addressed Miss Wildgoose:

"I hope, madam, you do not take seriously what is meant for a harmless joke."

Even an uncompromising platform lady is

not quite independent of sympathy.

Affected by this solitary condolence, Miss Wildgoose replied: "Sir, I thank you, and assure you that I am not upset by this pitiful and malignant exhibition of puerile petty spite. In this wretched caricature of a disspite. In this wretched caricature of a distinguished Transatlantic sister, and exponent of The Movement for Women, I regard Captain Rasper as I do any other privileged buffoon, clown, and mountebank. I only regret that he should find encouragement from people of rank, who ought to know better. But Lady Forrester, as a Queen of Fashion, is privileged, like other queens, to revive the old court custom of knowing a Fool revive the old court custom of keeping a Fool to amuse her guests!"

Well might the Curate look out of countenance. His well-meant remark served to produce this terrible reply, delivered in a loud, defiant voice, evidently intended to be a reprimand for the whole company, and felt as such! The speech had the desired effect

of checking further merriment. The guests gazed at Miss Wildgoose and the Curate. Captain Rasper looked very angry. Like other practical jokers, he did not relish the laugh being turned against himself. Even Lady Honoria looked wicked, and apparently meditated a sharp retort to Miss Wildgoose's impertinence.

"Ditto for you, Rasper," said Lord Oddfish aside, and added: "Tantane animis calestibus

ira."

Worthy Mr. Stedfast endeavoured to pour oil on the rising waves of strife, by saying: "Pray Lady Forrester, continue your scheme of Dress Reform. The subject is important and interesting."

This happy intervention allowed time for excitement to subside. Lady Honoria replied: "Only too delighted to prose a little more on my favourite fad, if I don't bore you."

There were many protests against such a

supposition

"Well then, rational evening costume for ladies is opposed to bare shoulders, waspwaists, long trains à la queue de la Cométe, and dresses which leave the upper part of the body unclothed, and the lower modelled like a mermaid——"

"Excuse me interrupting, Lady Honoria," said Lord Oddfish, "but that allusion to a mermaid reminds me of something in Virgil, or Horace—I can't recall the Latin. Can you help me, Rasper?"

The Captain shook his head. The Curate found courage to quote:

" ut turpiter atrum Desinat in piscem mulier formosa supernè;"

"Pray translate, Mr. Weatherall," said Lady Honoria.

"A beautiful woman above, terminating in

an ugly fish below."

"Well, that is a coincidence," said Miss Heartfree. "It never struck me before, but

we do dress somewhat like mermaids."

"Ah, ladies!" said Lord Oddfish, "Lady Honoria may preach about rational female costume, but she cannot practise. None of you dare. Fashion is too strong for you. You were all slaves to Queen Crinoline once. Now you are all in the other extreme. But a little bird whispers to me, that Crinoline will return some day, and then you ladies will all go into uniform again, obeying the ukase of the great Worth of Paris, or of some other invisible Potentate who rules fashions; before whom you all tremble."

"It's too true!" said Mrs. Rippington.

"That puts me in mind of another classical quotation. I've got the idea, but I can't always quote the words, you know," said Lord Oddfish, joining in the laugh against himself. "Will no one help me out? It's something about seeing the right, and approving, and then doing the very opposite. Mr. Stedfast, have you quite forgotten your Latin?"

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"It's impossible to forget what one never learned. I, my lord, make no pretensions to be a classical scholar."

He All eyes were turned on the Parson.

once more proved equal to the occasion.
"I think, my lord, you refer to this well known sentiment by Ovid:

> "' Video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor.'

Englished, if I mistake not, by Pope thus:

'I see the right, and I approve it, too, Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.'

St. Paul has a text to the same effect, which

it would be superfluous to quote."
"Thanks, Mr. Weatherall. You are quite a walking dictionary—a bookworm. remind me of that learned party who was so apt at classical quotations, he was said to have the Bodleian library in his pocket. Only, as usual, I can't think of his name. You need not laugh, Rasper."

"You mean Porson, my lord," said the

Curate.

"Porson, to be sure. Gad, I wish I had your memory, sir."

"You might then have been an ornament to the Church, My lord, said Captain Rasper. "Well," continued Lady Honoria, "it may

be a forlorn hope, but I intend rivalling the authority of this invisible potentate. Next season I propose issuing cards for my Rational Costume Ball. Every one to dress as each pleases."

"How nice!" said Miss Heartfree. " It

- would be like a Fancy Dress Ball."

 "But," said Lady Ogle, "some ladies dare not dress out of the fashion. Would you admit them?"
- "Certainly. They would come to laugh at the guys, dowdies, scarecrows, and might find the tables turned, and furnish in themselves, objects of laughter to us Rational Costume Ladies "
 - "How good!"
- "I know whom you are glancing at, Lady Honoria," said Mrs. Rippington.

"I was not thinking of anyone in particu-

- lar; but to whom do you refer?"

 "To Lady Modish. You know what a horror she professes to have for what she calls large waists. One day, at the British Museum, I drew her attention to an antique Venus, which she pronounced a perfect fright! So silly, was it not? Lady Modish boasts she can span her waist with her hands. Pray don't forget to send her a card for your Rational Costume Ball."
- "She shall be welcome to exhibit her own deformed and cuirassed thorax, her nose rubicund from tight-lacing, and her Chinese feet in high-heeled shoes, throwing all the weight of her body on her toes. We should be edified by beholding her panting for breath, and secretly envying the guys, dowdies, and

scarecrows, tripping by, on the light fantastic toe. Rational Costume ladies would strait-waistcoat their lungs, but adopt the old-fashioned, but graceful sacque, enabling them to float by like sylphs, displaying all the poetry of motion."

"Leaving every beauty free To rise and fall as nature pleases."

"Give me Nora Creina for a partner, in preference to Lady Modish."

"You still dance, my lord?"

"I attempt it sometimes, when rheumatism and gout permit. I'm fast falling into the sere and yellow leaf, you know."

"Fishing for compliments, my Lord," said Lady Ogle. "You would not like others to

hint at anything so unpleasant."

"Like all men who have enjoyed life, I'm not ashamed of growing old. Let me see, I think it is Dryden who says:

'Old as I am, for ladies' love unfit, The power of beauty I remember yet, Which once enflamed my soul, and still inspires my wit.' "

"Bravo, my Lord. You have not lost your memory. You talk of being old; but there—I won't flatter you."

"Well, judging from experience, I feel as old as What's-his-name, in the Old Testament. As to my age by the parish register, I leave you to guess."

Several very flattering guesses were made.

Miss Wildgoose said spitefully:

"By the crows'-feet under your eyes, I take you to be not far from sixty."

"No, upon my word," said Lord Oddfish earnestly. "Nothing near sixty. I am exactly that age fixed by Balzac, when a man is most dangerous to women—fifty-two!"

"Forewarned is forearmed, my Lord. You certainly have the character of a gallant, gay

Lothario."

"Well, I've no notion of being placed on the retired list just yet, although I'm no longer in the swim, like Rasper. By-the-way, how silent he is! What are you doing, Rasper? Taking notes of the conversation?"

"Making memoranda for one of his sporting

novels. Not very polite to us ladies."

Captain Rasper came forward, note-book in hand.

"Pray excuse my apparent ill-breeding, ladies. But a happy thought struck me. Lady Honoria, your stricture on Lady Modish was so epigramatic, and so true, that I have been trying to put it into verse, or rhyme. I've got it all but the last line."

"Read it, read it!" was the general

request.

"Remember I've had no time to polish the lines. You must take them in the rough.

"RATIONAL COSTUME FOR LADIES.

"Lady Modish declares the Venus a fright, A thirty-inch waist—Oh dear what a sight! A different thorax her ladyship shows, Deform'd by tight lacing, which reddens her nose. Her small Chinese feet high-heeled shoes expose, The whole of her weight thrown on to her toes! Her skeleton figure serves but to warn; In vain are her ladyship's efforts to scorn. The Guys and the Dowdies, and Scarecrows so gay, Are enjoying the party, and dancing away; While panting for breath, does her ladyship stand, After two or three turns, not in time to the band."

"How clever!" "Capital!" "Done in five or six minutes, too." "Almost an impromptu." "Lady Honoria furnished the ideas." "You must write the lines in my album." "I must have a copy," said Lady Ogle. "And I," said Mrs. Rippington. "And I," said Miss Heartfree. "Spare his blushes," said Lord Oddfish "Look here, Rasper. Give me the lines. I'll spout 'em as an impromptu, or read 'em to friends in confidence, especially the old maids. That's the surest way to circulate them. Useless to print 'em. Everyone writes verses now. Ha! Lady Honoria, looking at your watch. How goes the enemy?" "Just seven!" "Really." "So late." "Who would have thought it?" "How the time has slipped away!" The ladies made a move. "Sic transit gloria mundi," said Lord Oddfish, determined to shew he could remember one classical quotation. Then he hobbled across the room, to open the door, and said: "I shall look eagerly for the practical results of Lady Honoria's Rational Costume Reform in your evening toilets. Au plaisir de vous revoir belles dames!"

CHAPTER II.

"IN WIT A MAN, SIMPLICITY A CHILD."

"I dinner'd wi' a lord."

-Burns.

The Curate was so lost in admiration of a photograph of Lady Honoria, that he did not perceive the flight of time, or of the company. Suddenly he became conscious of a bell ringing, and looking round, saw a footman holding a flat, silver candlestick, containing a lighted taper. "Have the goodness to follow me, sir." Mechanically, the Curate obeyed, saying to himself: "I præ, sequar." The servant led the way along the gallery, up a wide staircase, and ushered the Curate into a handsomely furnished bed-chamber. The man stirred the fire, and lit a couple of wax candles on the dressing-table. He then said: "If you want anything more, sir, please to ring," bowed respectfully, and withdrew

The Curate looked round the bedroom, and soliloquised. "Now, what does this mean?" As already observed, he knew nothing about the fashionable ceremony of Kettledrum recently introduced, until that evening's experience. On that November evening, it was

dark at 4.30. His luncheon had been almost nothing. He firmly believed he had missed his dinner. He felt very hungry, and had been looking forward to a light supper. The company had all departed unceremoniously. And he was shown to his bedroom! What construction could he place on this treatment? His philosophy admitted but one conclusion—that he was expected to retire

supperless to rest!

He did think it odd that so aristocratic a family kept such very early hours. But this might be another of Lady Honoria's reforms, as well as Dress. Perhaps the company contemplated rising at dawn to-morrow, and being "over the hills and far away," in search of a fox? Cub-hunting, he understood to be practised at a very early hour. Or, there might be other aristocratic diversions requiring a very early start? What did he know of the customs of Laxington House? He felt very hungry. He sighed as he thought of the nice little cosy supper he should be now enjoying, were he at home with his mother. A feeling of Nostalgia came over him. He wondered what she would think and say, when he told her that he was sent dinnerless and supperless to bed. It certainly did seem singular hospitality. He recalled Shenstone's beautiful "Lines written at an Inn at Henley." How appropriate to his present position! A famished guest at Laxington House! Spite

of his cordial reception, the splendour of the rooms, the plush-wearing footmen, the respect with which he was treated, the more than comfortable bedroom; he felt as if he could willingly have exchanged all, for the homely freedom of the "Crown Inn" at Laxington. How truly could he say with the poet:

- "I fly from pomp, I fly from plate,
 I fly from fashion's specious grin;
 Freedom I love, and form I hate,
 And choose my lodging at an Inn.
- "Here, waiter, take my sordid ore,
 Which lackeys else might hope to win—
 It buys what courts have not in store,
 It buys me freedom at an Inn.
- "Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round, Where'er his stages may have been, May sigh to think he still has found The warmest welcome at an Inn!"

However, "what can't be cured, must be endured." Stay—the footman had said, "If you want anything more, sir, please to ring." He did want something more—something to eat. Like the Rev. Mr. Spalding in *The Private Secretary*, he felt such a pain in the region of the stomach. Should he ring—summon that friendly footman, and ask for a ham sandwich? The Curate rose from the comfortable arm-chair in which he had been meditating before the fire. His hand was on the bell-rope. But he felt ashamed to ring,

and give so much trouble. After all, suppers were unhealthy. Surely he—a clergyman—should be able to fast once in a way? He thought of the French proverb—"Qui dort, dine." He began reluctantly to prepare for bed. What a bed it was! The Curate dort, dine." He began reluctantly to prepare for bed. What a bed it was! The Curate had read Thackeray's "Book of Snobs" The Curate almost laughed, as he recalled the humorous exaggeration of the State-bed in Carabas Castle: "The huge gilt edifice is approached by steps, and so tall, that it might be let off in floors, for sleeping rooms, for all the Carabas family. An awful bed! A murder might be done at one end of the bed, and people sleeping at the other end, be ignorant of it. Gracious powers! Fancy little Lord Carabas in a night-cap, ascending those steps, after putting out the candle!" The Curate's bed was not quite so large, but the four-poster with curtains, presented a formidable appearance. Should he be able to sleep in this strange bed? Or would the scene he had witnessed, and the novelty of everything keep him awake? Suddenly the bell again boomed out through the silent evening. What could this mean? Was it the last vestige of the ancient curfew, introduced by William the Conqueror, and still preserved in the stately homes of a Norman Aristocracy? Happy thought! This was the true solution of the mystery. The first bell had rung at seven, doubtless as a signal to prepare for bed. The second bell rang again at 7.30. This could mean nothing more or less than "All lights out."

"Early hours indeed, and almost military strictness of discipline," soliloquised the Curate. "But such is the custom of Branksome Hall—I mean Laxington House." He carefully extinguished the candles, and sank into the luxurious feather-bed. What a contrast to his own hard mattress. His mother had often entreated him to have a feather bed. But the Curate strenuously resisted such a luxury, as unclerical. How many of his clerical brethren agreed with him? His habit was to rise early, and study before breakfast. If he slept on down, he would grow lazy like the hireling pastors denounced by Isaiah.

"Ah, mother," said the Curate, "how awful if in our Reformed Church, there should be men answering to the Prophet's description. 'They are all ignorant, all dumb dogs, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Greedy dogs which can never have enough; shepherds that cannot understand; all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Mrs. Weatherall replied: "We have not far to look for one who answers to this description."

look for *one* who answers to this description."

The novelty of a soft bed helped to keep the Curate awake. He lay blinking at the

bright fire. Suddenly the idea occurred, that he ought to have seen the fire out, before going to bed. Was it safe to leave it burning? A spark might fly out and set fire to Laxington House. Should he jump up, and rake out the burning embers? Could he leave his luxurious nest? There was a conflict between Duty, the voice of Conscience, and the dolce far niente. The latter conquered quered.

The Curate must have been asleep. How else could he have had such a vivid dream? That he was standing before the Communiontable, to be married by the Rector. The bride was Lady Honoria Forrester, the best man, Lord Oddfish. Suddenly, from the nave of the church, arose the Earl of Laxington to forbid the marriage. He gave three loud raps with his cane to arrest attention. Gradually the Curate became conscious that someone was knocking at the bed-room door. The same servant who had shown him to his room, said: "Did you hear the bell, sir?"

"Oh, yes, and my lights are out—the fire is burning, to be sure, but——"
"Beg pardon, sir, did you say as your lights went out? You'll find matches on your dressing-table."

"Now, what can be the meaning of this singular persecution?" thought the Curate. "Ah! I see how it is. The Earl is very particular about fire, as well he may be, for,

though of course insured, no money could replace the pictures and other heirlooms of such a palace! I suppose the servant is sent round to take away the matches, as a precaution against the dangerous practice of reading in bed." Accordingly the Curate rose, partially opened the chamber door, and held out the matches. The footman stared as if he saw a ghost.

"Why, sir, you are in the dark!"

"Yes, I told you I extinguished my bedroom candles."

"Oh, I thought you meant they went out of theirselves. Beg pardon, sir, I think there must be some mistake."

"None on my part."

"Have you been to bed, sir?"

"Of course. I've just got up."

"Bless me, sir, ain't you well? Don't you want no dinner, sir?"

" Dinner? I thought dinner was over many

hours ago."

- "Lor', no sir, dinner at height, sir. The second bell rung ten minutes since, and the company is all waitin' in the drorin'-room. Her ladyship thought p'raps you did not hear the second bell."
- "Dear me," said the Curate, "I have made a mistake. Pray tell her ladyship—I mean the Earl—not to wait for me, I shall be down in a very few minutes."

"Are you sure you can find your way, sir?"

asked the man, in perfect good faith.

"I think so. Perhaps you had better return and pilot me. Thanks; I can light my candles myself."

The footman departed, apparently afflicted with a very singular kind of whooping-cough.

Never had the Curate huddled on his

Never had the Curate huddled on his clothes so rapidly! He had to choose the alternative of facing a fashionable society, just as he was, or keeping the company waiting for dinner. His natural politeness made him prefer the former. In about five minutes he left his chamber, and luckily found the footman waiting for him, or he would certainly have lost his way. He entered the drawing-room, his hair rumpled, his white neckcloth knotted anyhow, and his vest buttoned awry. Altogether, he presented so ludicrous an appearance, that the best bred people could hardly have restrained their risibility. But they were well-bred, and they were waiting dinner. Lady Honoria presented the Curate to the Earl. The folding-doors were thrown open. A portly gentleman in black, with white neckcloth, advanced to Lady Honoria, bowed respectfully, and said: said:

"My lady is served."

The Curate decided that this clerical-looking personage could be no other than the Earl's domestic chaplain. Possibly the wish was father to the thought. For of course the chaplain would say grace, and the Curate dreaded being called upon to officiate. No sooner was

the welcome announcement made, than the company proceeded to the dining-room, in due order of precedence. The Earl led the way with Lady Ogle. Lord Oddfish followed with Lady Honoria. Mr. Stedfast took Mrs. Rippington, and Captain Rasper, Miss Heartfree.

pington, and Captain Rasper, Miss Heartfree.

Seeing no one escorting Miss Wildgoose, the Curate gallantly offered his arm. Whether the lady felt slighted at being left to the last, or acted up to her principles, she declined the proffered courtesy, with this chacteristic speech, "Thank you, Mr. Weatherby, for your politeness, but I regard this nonsensical ceremony, as one of the many observances instituted especially to keep women in leading-strings and childish helplessness. I beg, therefore, to be excused." They accordingly walked on side by side.

The folding-doors admitted them into a square ante-room, and another pair of folding-doors to the dining-room; the three apartments forming a handsome and spacious suite of rooms. The dining-room corresponded in size with the drawing-room, but was fitted up very differently, being panelled in dark carved oak to the height of ten feet. The walls above were covered with beautifully worked ancient tapestry. The subject was a series of hunting scenes, so artistically executed, so life-like and natural, that even the Curate, in spite of his principles, admired them. The ceiling was said to have been originally painted in the reign of Queen Anne. The subject was a

symposium from Homer's Iliad. The vivid brightness of the colouring, especially the flesh-tints of the gods and goddesses, revealed the restoration of a modern hand. The room was warmed by two blazing fires, and lit chiefly by a splendid chandelier. The oblong dining-table, with its magnificent epergne, hothouse flowers, and snow-white cloth, the side-board covered with massive silver plate, board covered with massive silver plate, formed a fine contrast to the dark oak panels and mahogany chairs. The banquetting-room presented a scene of mingled luxury and comfort, calculated to elevate every well-regulated mind. Imagine then, its effect, with all the force of novelty, heightened by previous fasting, on the Curate. He had retired to rest famished, disappointed, hurt. He now saw himself an honoured guest. He felt like Abon Hassan, the Sleeper Awakened, in "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments." tainments."

The guests were in their places. Lady Honoria at the head of the table, with Lord Oddfish on her right and Captain Rasper on her left. The Earl at the foot, with Lady Ogle on his right, and Miss Wildgoose on his left. There were ten covers, and ten chairs. No place reserved for the supposed chaplain, who stood behind the Earl's chair. "Humbleminded man!" thought the Curate, "does he not partake of the meat he blesses?" The Curate had dipped into the older novelists sufficiently to know that, in the "good old

times," Chaplains were often treated like servants. But he did not expect to see such slights perpetuated in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He felt troubled, distressed, indignant, at such an indignity to the Cloth, in the person of a clerical brother so much his senior. He doubted whether he ought not to take part with the despised Chaplain, and repudiate the Earl's hospitality. As though divining his thoughts, the Earl gazed fixedly at him. The puzzled Curate recalled his mother's admonitions. As dinner had not commenced, the Earl's look could not be an invitation to take wine.

Lady Ogle whispered to him: "The Earl expects you to say grace."
"Me?" said the Curate "I thought it

was the chaplain's privilege."

"There is no chaplain." You are the only clergyman present. You are again keeping the company waiting."

The Curate at once rose, and repeated the brief but impressive grace which he used at

home.

The dinner commenced. Lady Ogle had marked the direction of the Curate's glances, and divined his mistake. To make sure, however, she asked him, in a subdued tone, covered by the buzz and clatter of the dining-table, "What put the chaplain into your head?"

Unable to resist the pumping process, the Curate—" Ingenuus vultus puer, ingenuique

pudoris," at once replied: "I thought that grave-looking gentleman in black, was the Chaplain. He has a very clerical appearance."

Lady Ogle gave way to an irresistible fit of laughter, and when she could speak, said: "That grave-looking gentleman in black, with such a very clerical appearance, happens to be Simmonds, the butler. He will be quite proud of the compliment paid to the respectability of his appearance."

As the dinner advanced, the Curate observed that the guests did not take wine with each other. Each lady and gentleman drank independently. The wine-glasses were filled by the clerical-looking butler and footmen. The Curate considered this an improvement on the old-fashioned plan, and congratulated himself on escaping an ordeal, so trying to a nervous man. He made one or two trifling errors. Once he mistook his coloured finger-glass, for drinking-water. But by closely watching the other guests, he was enabled to get through dinner, "ab ovo Usque ad mala," without any flagrant breach of the proprieties. He made what Mr. Spalding calls "a very comfortable meal." Refreshed with meat and wine (of which he stood much in need), the Curate felt his spirits revive. Sitting at a well appointed spirits revive. Sitting at a well-appointed dinner-table, an Earl's guest, sipping wines of rare vintage, and tasting exquisite dishes composed under the personal superintendence

of a French Chef; listening to lively conversation, while his glance roved over such various objects of attraction, animate and inanimate; from the painted ceiling, and tapestried walls; from his noble host to his beautiful daughter; the Curate recanted his previous conviction, and no longer agreed with Shenstone. The Curate had not found —"The warmest welcome at an inn!" conversation was desultory. Hunting and Field sports (being suggested by the tapestry) were freely discussed. On this theme, the Curate was wisely silent. He could not Curate was wisely silent. He could not agree. It would be unpleasant to differ. One might have fancied the company had never heard of—so utterly indifferent did they seem to—his strong opinions on the "noble science." The Curate listened to Lady Honoria, and Captain Rasper discussing "Scrutator" on "The Science of Fox-hunting, and Management of the Kennel," and began to perceive there were two sides to the question: A truth which clergymen in general never learn at all, or only learn too late!

At length the dessert appeared. After one

At length the dessert appeared. After one glass of port, Lady Honoria made the signal for the ladies' departure, which was promptly obeyed by Lady Ogle, Mrs. Rippington, and Miss Heartfree. Miss Wildgoose prided herself on her contempt for all social usages which coerced her sex. She remained at the table long enough to swallow a third glass of port, and to permit Lord Oddfish to give her

a pretty broad hint, that she would do well to follow the other ladies. Her theory was that women should go wherever men went, and do everything that men did. Having thus nobly vindicated "The Movement for Women," Miss Wildgoose did, at length, condescend to depart. She, however, retired slowly and unwillingly; whether coveting more after-dinner wine, or after-dinner conversation, "Necdum satiata recessit."

The gentlemen now, left to themselves, plunged into politics. The Earl was eloquent upon the election at Laxington, to come off next spring. Filling his glass and passing the bottle (for the servants had now quitted the room), he said:

"As I presume we are all Conservatives, I have no secrets. I propose the health of our new candidate, whom we hope soon to congratulate as M.P. for our county."

"All four gentlemen drank to the health

and return of Mr. Stedfast.

He was a pleasant-looking, intelligent man, about fifty-four. He duly acknowledged the honour, and replied informally:

"My lords and gentlemen, I reserve my speech for the hustings. I can only say now I shall be too happy if the Earl of Laxington's prediction prove true. But are you sure, my lord, that the seat will be really vacant?"

"Quite sure," replied the Earl. present member, Colonel Cannon, is growing infirm, and feels unequal to the late hours of Parliament. He desires to hold the seat until April, to vote for a few favourite Bills, and then he will certainly retire. Of course, this is in strict confidence," added the Earl, looking round the table.

"Oh, of course," was echoed by all.

"Might I ask, though," said Lord Oddfish, "why Colonel Cannon makes such a secret of his determination to retire?"

"You ask that question seriously?" said

the Earl.

"Yes; one would think it can't much matter if everybody knows it now, or four months later. That's my view. Of course, I am no politician."

"No; that is easily seen, Oddfish," said

the Earl, drily.

"Will you, then, enlighten my ignorance, and explain the why and wherefore? What difference can it make whether the Colonel keeps his intention to resign, a secret, or publishes it in the papers?"

"Only this," said the Earl, "that if it were publicly known, or even generally suspected, so long beforehand, we might lose the seat

altogether."

"Oh, I see."

The Earl continued:

"We should have Liberals, Radicals, Republicans, in the field, with one or more candidates. The more the better, if any, as they rival each other. Even our own party might be foolish enough to contest the seat, although

I flatter myself, when it is known that I have promised my interest to Mr. Stedfast, that they would not do anything so foolish. If all goes well, we hope to return Mr. Stedfast without any opposition—a mere walk over the course—which will be very gratifying to all parties."

"Except Liberals, Radicals and Republicans, my lord," said Lord Oddfish, who could not dispense with his joke.

"Extremely obliged to you, my lord," said Mr. Stedfast to the Earl, "but, at the same time, I should be very sorry to think that my candidature kept a better man out of the field. I sincerely hope you are not sacrificing any deserving gentleman, any better man than myself. I would rather withdraw than think this."

"Mr. Stedfast," replied the Earl somewhat pompously and patronisingly, "such remarks do honour to your head and heart. They confirm me in my purpose. If I consulted only my own personal feelings and interests, and those of my family, I should certainly have brought forward my own nephew, the Honourable Mr. Forrester. He would be the natural representative for Laxington and this division of the County, according to family traditions. But sire according to family traditions. But, sir, when patriotic principles are at stake, then I put aside—I banish—all private considerations."

[&]quot;Very handsome," said Mr. Stedfast.

"Very handsome," repeated Lord Oddfish

and Captain Rasper.

"And," continued the Earl, "when it was represented to me, by influential members of the Party, that they had in their eye, a man, a gentleman, a conscientious Conservative—but who was, if I may be allowed to say so, sprung from the People, whence so many great men have arisen, to distinguish themselves as politicians, and to ornament the House, of which I am a humble member—and one who had accumulated a fortune, not by base tricks of trade, or gambling in the Funds, but by strict industry, and honourable enterprise; and that such a man would conciliate both parties—the County families, the gentry, and all the respectable middle classes—that even intelligent Radicals might vote for him;—then, gentlemen, I said that I would lay all personal feelings aside, and promise that gentleman all the interest that the Earl of Laxington can command."

All agreed that this was very handsome conduct in the Earl. But there are two sides to every question. Without any intention to deceive, the Earl had not stated the whole truth. The actual state of affairs was this. The Earl and Colonel Cannon had agreed that the latter should be a kind of warmingpan, to keep the seat till it was convenient for the Earl's nephew to stand for the County. The Colonel was willing to fulfil his share of the compact. The Earl, naturally, very much

desired to put his nephew and heir into the seat, when vacant. But this consummation was impracticable for several reasons. The Honourable Mr. Forrester had just sufficient self-knowledge to know that he had neither inclination nor fitness for Parliament. His ambition lay in quite other directions. He burned to distinguish himself on the turf, in the hunting-field, and generally as a sportsman. Meantime, he had already become notorious for lower, and more vicious, pursuits.

Even those who allowed the greatest latitude to the sowing of Wild Oats, could not conceal the fact, that Mr. Forrester was a heartless libertine, who lived an openly immoral life, and had already been stigmatised in open Court, as a convicted "corespondent," in plain English, an adulterer, as well as a seducer! He had neither mental nor moral qualities to cover, or palliate, his sins. He possessed all the vices, without any of the brilliant talents, of a mauvais sujet—a Mirabeau, without his genius! Mr. Forrester was lazy, dissipated, and a dullard. He knew, if he lived, he should be Earl of Laxington, and trusted to his future coronet, to cover all his sins and shortcomings. He was not popular. In every respect, outside the gratification of his own pleasures, he was a miser, and not disposed to spend a penny on election expenses. The Earl's expenditure far exceeded his rent-roll. Naturally, he was not

inclined to add considerably to his expenses, and after all, probably, fail to return a man, who seemed to think he rather conferred than received a favour, by accepting a seat in the House! Hence the Earl's support of Mr. Stedfast. Mr. Forrester would neither go to any expense himself, nor encourage the Earl to further burden the estate; yet he logically and consistently, resented the Earl's transfer of interest, from his nephew to Mr. Stedfast. Such was the characteristic conduct of this cub of quality!

"And now gentlemen," said the earl, "will

you take any more wine?"

"No more, thank you, my lord," was the

unanimous reply.

Lord Oddfish added: "I have had my whack;" which, from a slight thickness in his lordship's speech, appeared a superfluous remark.

"Very well, then, I shall ring for coffee, and then we will join the ladies."

Coffee, without milk, was then handed round, and the guests returned to the drawing room. During the transit, Lord Oddfish took the Curate's arm in a friendly, familiar manner. His lordship apologised for the liberty, by saying he found his gout troublesome.

"Dear me," replied the simple Curate, in perfect good faith. "Yes, I perceive you walk with difficulty. What an affliction! Pray lean on me."

Lord Oddfish did indeed, lean very heavily on the unsuspecting Curate, thanking him in the words of *Autolycus* to the *Clown*: "Softly, dear sir, softly. You ha' done me a charitable office."

office."
On entering the drawing room, they found Lady Honoria executing a very difficult piece of music on the piano. Whatever Lady Honoria did, she did well. She now brought out the tones of the instrument, with the vigour and skill of a professional player. Her execution was most effective. Her piano passages were gentle and soothing, as though the keys had been swept by an angel's wing. Her fortes took care of themselves! The other ladies were profuse in their expressions of admiration, when the piece was finished, with the exception of Miss Wildgoose. That good lady had no ear for music, and with her usual independence, and scorn of compromise, made no pretence of listening, but turned over a portfolio of engravings. Without possessing a critical ear, the Curate (like most superior persons) was powerfully inmost superior persons) was powerfully influenced by music. But if he enjoyed Lady Honoria's playing, he still more enjoyed her singing. Lady Honoria's rich soprano rose in unison with Captain Rasper's powerful baritone, in an exquisitively beautiful Italian duet—Una Notte a Venezia. Two lovers floating in a gondola, over the moon-lit, tranquil sea, sing together:

"Stretto mi tieni al cor, O! tu mio dolce amor,
In questo caro amplesso Potessi almen morir.
Ed in un bacio, un bacio stesso,
Dar l'ultimo respir, Ah! si, Dar l'ultimo respir."

Freely rendered:—

"O, sweet love, fold me closely to thy heart,
Within thy dear embrace, I fain would die.
Lip press'd to lip, thus, never more to part,
Surrender life, and breathe out our last sigh."

From his knowledge of Latin, the Curate partially understood the words, rendered intelligible by perfect pronunciation and articulation. Thoroughly overcome by the pathos of the wild, wailing music, the Curate was totally unable to control his feelings. He covered his face with his hands, to hide the tears which gushed from his eyes. And the silence which followed the conclusion of the duet, was broken by his convulsive sobs. Lord Oddfish's dreary joke about "the parson blubbering," entirely missed its effect, and provoked from Lady Honoria, this spirited rejoinder:

"I am astonished my lord, that you should ridicule such genuine emotion! Never in my life have I received such a compliment."

Then, with true delicacy, she continued playing, so as to divert the company's attention, and give the Curate time to compose himself.

Mr. Weatherall had now leisure to devote to observation of the ladies' toilets. He had

promised his mother to tell her, as well as he could, how Lady Honoria and other ladies who might be present, were dressed. A rash promise, which no man but a man-milliner could ever fulfil. The Curate was surprised to find that all the ladies were dressed in the extreme of the Fashion which, but a few hours before, they had unanimously condemned! Lady Honoria seemed to have quite forgotten all her good resolutions and "Principles," about "Rational Female Costume." She was as great a slave as the rest. Only in one respect had she the courage of her opinions. Her waist was not unnaturally contracted, but looked small, in comparison with the breadth of her finely developed shoulders. Lady Honoria wore a robe of dark green velvet, which toned down her brilliant complexion, and, finely contrasted with her auburn tresses, arranged in classic style, relieved her white neck and full, white, rounded arms. A coronet set with diamonds, gave a queenly look to her head, and an aigrette of similar precious stones, glittered in her bosom. She wore a necklace of large pearls, and three rich bracelets on one arm. Thus habited, Lady Honoria reminded the Curate, of the picture of Titian's daughter. His sense of rectitude was shocked at the fair lady's inconsistency; that she herself, such a votary of fashion, should pretend a wish to reform female costume. But somehow, as he gazed, he became more lenient; freely forgave her inconsistency, and decided that it would be

a pity to interfere with the present fashion. Apparently also, he did not study the dresses of the other ladies. At least, he described most minutely Lady Honoria's costume, but could answer no questions of his mother, about the others.

It might have been supposed that after her decided opinion, about obliterating all distinctions between male and female costume, Miss Wildgoose would have tried to reconcile practice and precept. But even this strong-minded lady formed no exception to the general rule. She did not, indeed, dress with taste. Her colours were badly matched and contrasted. Still, she evidently employed a fashionable dressmaker. Perhaps she bided her time, until, following the example of some eminent American lady leaders of "The Movement for Women," she could dispense altogether with the garments of the slave, and adopt those of the oppressor and tyrant! A method of vindicating Woman's Rights, and elevating the Sex, which places beyond all cavil, the doctrine of Sexual Equality!

"And now, my love," said the Earl, approaching Lady Honoria, "as we propose hunting to-morrow, if a good scenting day, you and all our friends, will be the better for

a good night's rest."

The company separated for the night.
The footman, whose duty it was to show the Curate to his room, said:

"You won't mind waiting a couple of

minutes, sir?"

"No," replied the Curate, "but give me the candle, I think I can find my way by myself."

"Well, sir, if you don't mind trying, I will

be back directly."

The Curate went along the gallery, ascended the staircase at the end, and, as a matter of course, lost himself upon the upper corridor. He could not remember whether his room was on the right or left side. He was quite resigned to wait, but seeing a man and woman conversing at a little distance, and taking them for servants, he approached to enquire his way. He had just got as far as Mr. Spalding's commencement, "Do you know—?" when the man turned round, with a scowling face, and said savagely:

"Yes; I do know I'm not a menial, Mr.
Curate!"

Taken aback at such unexpected rudeness, the Curate did not reply. The man and woman departed. Just then the footman arrived, out of breath, and showed the Curate his room. Mr. Weatherall then remembered that the man who had answered him so snappishly, was the Earl's private secretary, Mr. Blackadder. The Curate knew him by sight. The woman's face also seemed strangely familiar. Where had he seen and spoken to her? Everybody knows how annoying it is not to be able to identify a familiar face.

The Curate puzzled over it, while undressing. It was not until he had got into bed, that the problem was solved, and he exclaimed, "Oh, to be sure—Miss Minckes!"

The Curate wondered why Blackadder had turned round on him so rudely. Did the secretary think him (the Curate) an intruder on his private conversation, and resent his question accordingly? Miss Minckes had sneered disdainfully. Why should they be so suspicious, and ready to take offence? Even to the Curate's guileless nature, there seemed something mysterious, uncanny, foreboding, in these two persons whispering together secretly, late at night, as if hatching some conspiracy. The Curate fell asleep, but in his dreams these sinister faces mingled, and served as foils to others, and especially to one beautiful face—that of Lady Honoria Forrester! Once more, he dreamed that he stood before the Communion-table, to be married. Once more, the ceremony was interrupted, but this time, not by the Earl, but by Blackadder. He thrust his fiendish face between bride and bridegroom, plucked off the veil, and struck the bride a fearful blow on the face! The vision of Lady Honoria's face, streaming with blood, caused the Curate to cry out, and, like the Opium-Eater, to awake "in struggles," and almost like him, to cry, "I will sleep no more!" Thank God, it was but a dream!

CHAPTER III.

THE HUNTING BREAKFAST.

On entering the breakfast-room next morning, the Curate beheld the Earl and the three other gentlemen in "pink," and the ladies in riding-habits, with the exception of Miss Wildgoose. In spite of his prejudices against hunting, he could not deny that the costume was most becoming, and a hunting breakfast a most appetising one. The table was covered with a variety of good things, besides the orthodox tea and coffee. The company were all in high spirits, anticipating a good day's sport. And there was an obandon about the whole proceedings, which was irresistible. In her habit of Lincoln green, Lady Honoria looked as bewitching as on the previous evening, in her velvet robe. But she always looked well, in every costume. She held up her finger, partly beckoning, partly menacing, to the Curate, and said:

"Sluggard! approach, and sit beside me, if you are not afraid. You know well you deserve a scolding."

"Fly for your life!" said Miss Heartfree.

"You have no idea how angry she is with

you."

Without venturing a reply, the Curate dropped, like a fascinated bird, into a chair next Lady Honoria.

"First we will begin by shaking hands,"

said Lady Honoria.

"Bruisers always do," said Lord Oddfish.

"I hope you rested well."

"Never fear, your ladyship; he's fit to take his punishment," cried Lord Oddfish.

"Will you take tea or coffee, Mr.

Weatherall?"

"Bother the slops! Try something stronger. It will give you Dutch courage. Follow my advice, Weatherall."

"And your lordship's example?" said Lady Honoria with emphasis, which provoked a

laugh at Lord Oddfish's expense.

"A fellow who intends riding straight to hounds, must lay a good foundation. Tea and coffee are apt to make a fellow nervous. This venison pasty is capital, but requires something to wash it down."

"Which fully accounts for your milking the cocoanut," said Captain Rasper. "I'll thank you for some of the pasty, unless you

want it all yourself, old man!"

"It's more than you deserve, Rasper, for your abominable slang. It's excessively rude to call anyone old, even in jest."

"But do you really intend to follow the hounds, my lord, or only to view them away

your general plan, I believe?" said Lady Honoria.

"I intend to do my best, and no man can do more. No man can know what he can actually accomplish in the hunting-field, how-ever good his intentions. My resolve, at present, is to ride straight across every obstacle in reason."

"You'll find it impossible to ride straight, my lord, if you are not less liberal with the Cognac," said Captain Rasper, with an accent on the word straight, which made the equivoque irresistible.
"I detest puns," said Lord Oddfish, "and

quite agree with Dr. Johnson—'The man who makes a pun, would pick a pocket.'"

Captain Rasper looked as if meditating an angry retort. But the Earl interfered:

"Come, no quarrels between old friends on a hunting morning. You began it, Rasper. Give and take. We shall have a glorious

scenting-day."

Thus harmony was restored. Under cover of a general conversation on the "Noble Science," Lady Honoria seized the opportunity of commencing a dialogue with the Curate. A beautiful woman exerts wonderful fascination over a man, whom she flatters by thus singling him out from the rest of the company. Lady Honoria was an adept in the art commonly called "twisting a person round one's finger." She thus plunged at once in medias res.

"You were awfully hard on us poor hunting people, last Sunday, in your sermon."

The Curate made shift to reply that it was difficult on first hearing a discourse, to grasp its full meaning.

"Granted! Your sermon will doubtless appear in print, and then I hope to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, at leisure."

"I shall feel honoured and gratified by your ladyship's doing so." The good man was actually learning to pay compliments.

"Meantime, don't think I intend to let you off criticism till then. We ladies are far too impulsive to wait. Besides, we may become fast friends, and then I should forget to scold you."

The Curate thrilled, blushed, bowed.

Lady Honoria continued:

"Besides, I listened attentively; I don't think I lost a word. And you made your meaning perfectly plain. You are a bold man. You are not afraid to call a spade, a spade."

"My discourse was the outcome of long meditation. I can assure your ladyship it was perhaps more painful for me to deliver, than for you to hear. I made up my mind to make many enemies."

"Candidly now, did you not think you had

mortally offended me and papa?"

"Really I was afraid I had."

"Oh! we are not so thin-skinned. We

hunting people are case-hardened. Besides, I like to hear both sides of a question. You told us what you believe the truth. Anyone present could see and hear you were awfully sincere."

"Thank you, Lady Forrester. I hope that the sincerity of my intention may excuse the unpleasantness of the truth told."

"That is assuming it is the truth. Are we not like the two knights disputing on opposite sides of the shield? And you parsons are not infallible, You see I respect you too much to flatter. In theology I should hardly venture to criticise. But when you venture on debateable ground, it is different. Par exemple, you made several errors in your description of hunting. You said it was a blank day, when we did not kill our fox. That is wrong. A blank day is when we draw blank coverts; when we do not find a fox, and there is nothing to hunt."

"Tabell beer your ladyship's correction in

"I shall bear your ladyship's correction in

mind. I am much obliged."

"I presume, Mr. Weatherall, you never hunted, and never were present at a hunt."

"Never!"

"Ah, that's it! You are too good to hunt."
"Too good!" said Lord Oddfish, unceremoniously cutting into the dialogue. "That's where the parsons mistake. They all run like a mad bull at their best friend—the Devil. Beg pardon—I should say the Old Gentleman.

"My lord," said Captain Rasper, "you forget your own precept:—'It's exceedingly rude to call anyone old, even in jest."

"Don't interrupt me, Rasper. Besides, I'm not in jest. Parsons dilate on the wickedness of the world, without any personal knowledge of its wickedness."

"Surely," said the Curate, "it is impossible to live in the world, without knowing it to be

wicked."

"That's it. It all depends on whether you live in, or out of, the world. There's a great deal of wickedness, and a great deal of good too, in the world, that good people don't see. I mean, you parsons don't mix enough in it, to know the wickedness by personal experience. You are not men of the world, and so can't describe it. Curious fact, isn't it? We are all more interested in bad, than in good characters."

"Speak for yourself, my lord," interjected

Captain Rasper.

"Of course, I refer to novels. The good characters are always insipid. Why? Because they are so in real life Now, Mr. Weatherall, I respect the Cloth, and don't mean to be personal, but if you had a spice of the—hum—ha—the Old Gentleman in you—I mean, if you were not quite so strait-laced and so respectable—if you had ever sowed your wild oats, and kicked over the traces, been a little fast, like jolly good fellows among the Laity—why—you would preach

deuced—I mean, much better sermons. You would know better how to deal with penitents, and perhaps you would have more fellow-feeling for sinners. At present, parsons are the sternest magistrates, and give the severest punishments. The reason is you want men to be angels. No offence meant."

"And none taken, I assure you, my lord," said the Curate heartily. "Though I cannot agree with what you say, I think I see your point."

point."

"Let me make it clearer, by an illustration. I am intimate with a Broad Church parson— Rumbold of Boniface—deuced good company over a bottle. His forte is Temperance lecturing. I'm not joking. I heard him once. He shed tears himself, and made the audience cry. Wasn't there a collection! I saw one cry. Wasn't there a collection! I saw one party empty his purse into the plate. I said to him after the lecture: 'Rumbold, how do you do it? How do you manage to tickle the groundlings?' 'That's my secret,' said Rumbold, 'but let's go and crack a bottle together, for my throat's that dry, and my coppers are hot.' 'What! you don't mean that?' I said. Well, I drew it all out of him during our sederunt. He told me in strict during our sederunt. He told me, in strict confidence, that every time he delivered a Temperance lecture, he was suffering from a racking headache—tight the night before—so he spoke feelingly! I reproached him with his duplicity. He replied: 'Duplicity be hanged! I fulfil my engagements. I deliver

Temperance lectures, which bring in money, and make hundreds take the pledge. Listen to muffs, who were never drunk in their lives, lecturing against drunkenness. They know nothing about it. What can they say? Whereas I feel all the agony, physical, mental and moral, remorse of conscience, combined with splitting headache, at the very moment I describe them. No wonder my lectures are effective. I thoroughly appreciate the Irishman's reply to the lady who asked him what pleasure there could be in getting drunk? "Sure, ma'am, there should be some pleasure in getting drunk, for there's none in getting sober!""

The Curate looked grave, and said:

"I hope the story is exaggerated. Especially as it was communicated in strict confidence!"

"If it is not an impromptu invention," said

Captain Rasper."

"Pray, my lord," said Lady Honoria, "do not interrupt with such absurd stories. I was about to say that Mr. Weatherall should be present at a meet of fox-hounds once, at least, if only to condemn the sport more forcibly."

All the ladies, except Miss Wildgoose,

thought so too.

"Precisely my friend Rumbold's plan," said Lord Oddfish,

Lady Honoria continued, addressing the Curate:

"I think I know what your objection will be, Mr. Weatherall. You may say, that if you attended a hunt, you could not consistently condemn hunting."

"Your ladyship has divined my thoughts."

"There's something in that, if you practised hunting, and preached against it. But, audi alteram partem. Look at the other side of the question. Knowing nothing personally about hunting, you must be prejudiced against the 'noble science.' At least you cannot know from experience, all that's to be said in its favour. Now, if you had tried it—only once—àpropos, I believe you are a good horseman? I think I have seen you well mounted."

What man is insensible to flattery,

What man is insensible to flattery, especially from a beautiful woman? The Curate was drinking in the insidious draught, con mucho gusto. He was gratified to own that he could ride. In some of his country curacies, he had to serve two or three distant villages, and consequently to ride several miles between the services. He prided himself on his horsemanship, as much as Parson Adams on his pedestrian, or rather running powers, when he defied the stage-coachman to overtake him!

Lady Honoria (with her womanly tact) noticed, and humoured this weakness. She pressed her advantage: "Let me advise you to attend one of our meetings—not to follow the hounds, you know, but just to see them draw a covert or two, and witness the burst. That is, if you don't mind so far countenancing such cruel people, as we hunting-ladies are?"

"Oh! there can't be any cruelty in fox hunting, you know," said Captain Rasper, as if enunciating an axiom of Euclid.

"What!" cried Lord Oddfish. "Does anyone pretend to call fox hunting cruel? Why, that's only worthy of beggars never on horseback; fellows too cowardly to risk their own necks, or wretched Rads, bagmen, counter-skippers, and others, who envy gentlemen the field-sports they can't enjoy themselves!"

"Take care what you say, my lord. We have here an eloquent preacher, who throws his influence into the scale against us."

Many a preacher, bold as a lion in the pulpit, is diffident as a girl in private. The Curate was one of these.

"Oh! that's all very well," said Lord Oddfish. "We expect that sort of thing from the pulpit. We get it, and if we don't like it, we must lump it. It's very easy to preach, when no one has the right of reply. But the question of Hunting is not to be settled summarily, by a sermon,"

settled summarily, by a sermon."

The Curate said: "I expressed my sincere and deliberate convictions against Hunting and other field sports. But I am incapable of taking refuge in Coward's Castle. I shall

be pleased to listen, and profit by any fair

arguments on the other side."

"Oh! if you are one of those parsons who will listen to reason, well and good. Now, I defend fox hunting, not only as our grand National sport, and good for men, women, dogs, and horses—and you can't deny they all enjoy it——"

"I do not, my lord," said Miss Wildgoose.
"I flatter myself I am a representative

woman!"

Lord Oddfish loooked at Miss Wildgoose, and then said: "You do flatter yourself, madam. There is the less necessity that I should."

"Thank you, my lord."

"You are very welcome, madam."

"My lord, I disdain to bandy words with

you."

"Happy to hear it. I will now proceed: I say hunting is good for the fox too. And more — Reynard has the greatest possible interest in maintaining our fine old English pastime of fox-hunting."

"Indeed?" said the Curate, smiling. "I never heard that before. How do you main-

tain such a paradox?"

"Very easily. Rasper, where's that last sporting novel of yours? I forget the name. But it contain a capital defence of fox hunting, brief, and to the point."

"I don't carry my novels about in my pockets," said the Captain. "Besides, it will

bore the company."

"Not at all!"

"Highly delighted!"

"Pray oblige us."
"I am reading 'Hunters, Hearts, and Heiresses," said Miss Heartfree. "I think I left it in the drawing-room."

"We have several copies," said Lady Honoria. "I will send to the library for

one."

The novel was brought, and Lord Oddfish read out the following:

"Fox Hunting Defended by an Old Fox.

- "A Jocular illustration of vulpine cunning, is that foxes read the newspapers to learn where the hounds meet."
- "That they may be hunted, I suppose?" interrupted Miss Wildgoose.

"No, that they may avoid being hunted."

- "I thought you said they liked it, my lord?"
- "If you will allow me to finish, Miss Wildgoose, you will better understand what I said—that foxes had the greatest possible interest in maintaining hunting."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Wildgoose.

- "I proceed to prove it." Lord Oddfish continued, reading: "'Let us pursue this conceit. Imagine a fox-council deliberating on the question whether fox-hunting should be abolished by act of Parliament—"
 - "Of course they would all vote for

abolition of fox hunting," interpolated Miss Wildgoose.

Lord Oddfish continued: "An old fox addresses the meeting thus: 'My lords and gentlemen, the resolution which I hold in my paw, is this, "Save us from our friends." Philanthropists who try to abolish fox hunting, are our most dangerous enemies! (Opposition, interruption, cries of No, no! Yes, yes! Why, why? and hear, hear, &c.) Don't mistake me, friends. I love my species. Fox hunting per se is bad, wicked, cruel;—but the per se is bad, wicked, cruel;—but the proverb says, "Of two evils choose the least!" Now can't you imagine a much worse evil than fox hunting? (No! Yes! No!) The honourable gentleman who howls "No," is evidently a very young, and green fox—I fear only a cub. The evil I refer to as worse than fox hunting is fox extermination! (Cheers.) Now, my friends, we must choose one or the other evil—hunting, or extermination. It is Hobson's choice. Why are we preserved? Not, for our social habits. We are not Not for our social habits. We are not Not for our social habits. We are not appreciated by human animals. We are accounted mischievous, rapacious, thieves! Yet we only copy men, in killing far more fowls, ducks geese, rabbits, &c., than we can eat at one meal. (Laughter). Not for our flesh. Men don't eat us. They call us vermin. They don't like our perfume. No accounting for tastes. Not for our fur, which does not fetch a high price, though our brushes are carefully preserved as ornamental trophies. Why then are we so carefully preserved? We are preserved for hunting purposes alone! To that end we are carefully pampered, permitted to feed on poultry, leverets, &c. and encouraged to increase and multiply. I challenge denial of the facts. My lords and gentlemen, the fox is the most intelligent of all animals. I do not insult your vulpine understandings. You draw at once this inevitable inference. Let our so-called humanitarian friends succeed in passing an act of itarian friends succeed in passing an act of Parliament against fox hunting, and our doom is sealed. "Troja fuit!" "We may then write over our kennels, "Ye, who enter here leave hope behind." For that act would arm every yokel, every farmer's wife, against us. Well may you shudder! In twelve months, the British fox would become extinct, like the wolf. (Hear, hear.) I have been hunted often: I cannot say I like it. But I tolerate it, as my destiny. In the course of my long life, I have learned many wiles. And I hope to die in my kennel. But if men should, by some evil chance, cease to preserve us for hunting, I should not dare to leave my hole. An honourable member has suggested emigration. That is simply impossible, unless we could avail ourselves of state aided emigration, to stock British colonies. I need not tell you Great Britain is an island and that it is impossible to reach the continent by swimming: Scotland contains far wilder

districts, so far suitable for us. Yet there, we should be simply rushing on the fate we hope to avoid. For in Scotland they do not hunt, and would therefore exterminate foxes! Therefore, for my own sake, for that of my vixen and cubs for all your sakes, in the interest of British foxes, and foxes throughout the world, I say let fox hunting flourish! I see a human reporter present in yonder tree; I might add many arguments for fox hunting applicable to men! For example, that this "noble science" maintains first-rate breeds of dogs and horses. That it is an admirable school of horsemanship. That British fox hunters are the boldest riders, and form the finest cavalry in the world. That this national sport retains at their country seats, during winter, numbers of nobility and gentry, who would otherwise be absentees. Abolish hunting, and immense sums (now spent in the country, during the most rigorous season, when the poor most suffer) will cease to be expended where most needed! I could add much more, but I see I have convinced you. It would be superfluous to waste more arguments on men, after having convinced foxes!' The orator ceased. The resolution was carried by acclamation. So many brushes were in motion, that our reporter felt the need of fresh air. When he returned, the fox council had adjourned sine die, leaving a very strong scent behind."
"And now, ladies and gentlemen," continued

Lord Oddfish, "before closing the volume, let me give you one more brief extract. You are unanimous, I see. Captain Rasper supplements his defence of fox-hunting with this, by the Ettrick Shepherd, in 'Noctes Ambrosianæ.' 'It seems,' says North, 'fox hunting too, is cruelty,' 'To wham?" says the Shepherd. Then, he asks, 'if it be cruel to the dogs, to feed them, and kennel them well, and gi'e them, twice a week, or aftener, during the season, a brattlin run o' thretty miles after a fox?—or if it be cruel to the horses to feed them on five or six feeds o' corn per diem, and to gi'e them skins as sleek as satin, and galop them like deevils in a hurricane, up hill and down brae, and loup or soom canals and rivers, and flee over hedges, and dikes, and palings, like birds? Or if it be cruel to men, to inspirit wi' a rampagin' happiness five score o' the flowers o' England or Scotland's youths, a' wi' caps and red coats, and whups i' their hauns? Or if it be cruel to the lambs, and leverets, and geese, and turkeys, and dyucks, and patricks, and wee birds, and ither animal eatables, to kill the fox that devours them?' And lastly, as to the principal party, the fox. 'A fox,' says the Shepherd, 'is no sae complete a coward as to think huntin' cruel, and his haill nature is then on the alert, which in itsel' is happiness. Huntin' prevents him fa'in' into languor and ennui, and growin' ower fat on howtowdies (hens). He's no killed every time

he's hunted. When the jowlers tear him to pieces, he shows fecht, and gangs aff in a snarl. How could he dee mair easier?—and for a' the gude he has ever dune, or was ever likely to do, he surely had leeved lang aneuch."

These extracts were much applauded by the four lady and gentlemen fox-hunters.

The Earl observed:

"That is certainly an admirable defence of fox-hunting, and all the more remarkable for being written by a native of Scotland, where fox-hunting is not, as with us, a national sport."

"The noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt do their best to make it a national sport, my lord," said Captain Rasper.
"I had some fine hunting when stationed in

Scotland."

"For all that, I am not convinced," said Miss Wildgoose. "I hold hunting a barbarous amusement, utterly unworthy of persons of refinement, especially of ladies."

refinement, especially of ladies."

"But Miss Wildgoose, you are inconsistent with your own theories, that the sexes should assimilate in every possible way; that women should do whatever men do; accompany men everywhere; be like men, and even dress like men."

"Lady Honoria Forrester," replied Miss Wildgoose, "if I am inconsistent, I have plenty of my own sex, and the other also, to keep me company. But to all general

rules, there are exceptions. This is one of them, as you would soon perceive, if you would really devote yourself to the study of 'The Movement for Women.'"

"Believe me, I fully intend to do so, Miss Wildgoose, and I could not have a better instructor than yourself."

"Whether you are in jest or earnest, Lady Honoria, I hope to be able to return the compliment, and boast some day of my noble pupil."

The Curate admitted he had received

entirely a new light on fox-hunting.

"So much for the theory, Mr. Weatherall," said Lady Honoria. "You must come and judge for yourself of fox-hunting in practice. I can give a strong additional reason for coming. Your presence would have a moral and refining influence, and tend most effectually, to repress any coarse language or oaths among the outsiders. I must admit Hunting is not so select as it used to be. I am always glad, for this reason, to see parsons in the hunting-field."

In short, Lady Honoria flattered with such art, that she at last prevailed on the Curate to promise to consider the suggestion! She had the prudence to know when to stop, and to let well alone. A woman of inferior tact, would have asked the Curate to accompany the party, on the present occasion, and thus risked a decided refusal. The idea did occur to Lady Honoria, but she wisely refrained from

a step which might have defeated all her plans.

"Hark! the horses!" said Captain Rasper.

"What a quick ear you have!" said Mrs. Rippington, "I hear nothing."

"The sound of trampling hoofs was soon

heard.

"They are coming," said Lady Ogle.
"Oh! the dear creatures!" cried Miss Heartfree.

She and the other ladies went to the windows, to gaze on eight beautiful thorough-bred hunters, which were being led to and fro in the courtyard by the grooms.
"Now, ladies!" said the Earl, "we have

four miles to ride to the meet, and must not blow our horses. Pray don't keep us

waiting."

Oh! we are quite ready," cried all the ladies simultaneously. They followed up this declaration by disappearing, not to the hall door, but to their several rooms.

"Just like women!" said Lord Oddfish. "They are never quite ready. Always keep

gentlemen waiting."

"Say just like hunting ladies, my lord,"
said Miss Wildgoose. "I pride myself on my
punctuality. I never keep any gentleman waiting."

To do them justice, the ladies soon reappeared. The gentlemen got their hats, hunting-caps, whips, &c. And now, it was the ladies' turn to laugh at the gentlemen for

not being quite ready. "By fox-hunters of the old school, a few little extras were considered requisite to complete their equipment for the field. The loose shoe was generally attached to the saddle, in case of losses of this kind. A small leather case, for eau de vie, or tincture of rhubarb, according to taste—the latter having been, as reported, the usual cordial taken by the great Mr. Meynell, when exhausted by the fatigue of a long run." [Scrutator's Science of Fox Hunting, chap. 22.] Lord Oddfish "tipped" the parson-like butler, and pocketed a flask, probably containing something stronger than tincture of rhubarb!

The Curate took this opportunity of remembering the servants very handsomely. Gladly would he have offered his services to assist Lady Honoria to mount. But partly from bashfulness, partly from just diffidence in his own skill, he stood aside, and saw that office performed by Mr. Stedfast. The Curate could not help envying a man old enough to be his father, as he took Lady Honoria's little foot in his hands, while the fair horsewoman sprang lightly to her saddle.

All the party being mounted, the Curate advanced and made his adieux to Lady Honoria, the Earl, and guests; expressing in few, but well-chosen words, the very great pleasure he had received from his visit.

"No need to hurry away, Mr. Weatherall," said Lady Honoria. "I feel sure Miss Wild-

goose will be happy to show you the picturegallery, and anything else worth seeing in the

House and grounds."

"Thanks, Lady Forrester, but my dear mother will be anxious for my return. Permit me to postpone the picture-gallery to a future opportunity, when I may hope to be honoured by having your ladyship for my cicerone."

Lady Honoria appeared pleased at the compliment. She smiled, and said: "Be it so. Au revoir, Mr. Weatherall."

The cavalcade moved off at a walk, two and two. The Earl led the way, riding beside Lady Ogle. Lady Honoria followed with Mr. Stedfast; Mrs. Rippington and Lord Oddfish. Miss Heartfree and Captain Rasper brought up the rear.

The Curate stood, hat in hand, gazing till Lady Honoria had disappeared through the portal of the courtyard. Then, Miss Wildgoose addressed him: "Mr. Weatherly, I purpose going into Laxington to shop. I shall be happy of your company, so far as our ways lay together." Miss Wildgoose was too busy reforming her sex, and the world generally, to look at home, and reform her own grammar.

Had the Curate told the truth, he would have made Miss Wildgoose his mortal enemy. For, at that moment, he would have preferred solitude to her society. He had anticipated thinking only of Lady Honoria, as he

sauntered home through the park alone. This was not to be. He bowed, and said he should be most happy to accompany Miss Wildgoose. Even good people, in Society, find it necessary to tell white lies occasionally. "I shall not detain you five minutes, Mr. Weatherton." But, by the Curate's watch, twenty minutes had elapsed before the punctual lady returned! This was one of her exceptions to general rules. Miss Wildgoose did not mind keeping a Curate waiting. They walked on together through the park.

"How do you like Lady Honoria Forrester,

Mr. Weatherby?"

"Very much, indeed."

"Humph! she can be vastly polite and civil when she chooses, and where she takes a fancy. But will it last? Does she mean it? Is she sincere?"

The Curate felt somewhat disgusted. Under any circumstances, it was rude in a guest to begin criticising a hostess, as soon as her back was turned. And in his present frame of mind, the criticism of Miss Wildgoose was doubly painful. That lady continued: "I am not censorious, like those frivolous spinsters who have nothing else to do, but talk of their neighbours. I have my glorious Mission. I never condescend to tattle and scandal. I should be sorry to say behind Lady Honoria's back, what I would not say to her face. But I feel it my duty to warn

you, Mr. a—a—Mr. Allweather, against Lady Honoria."

The Curate could not run away from Miss Wildgoose, or tell her to hold her tongue, or change the subject. Though he would not have listened to a man disparaging Lady Honoria. The Curate comforted himself with thinking that, after such a preface of self-praise, Miss Wildgoose could not say anything very bad of Lady Honoria. And he felt really curious to learn what Miss Wildgoose had to say. He had not long to wait. The reformer of her sex (who never condescended to tattle and scandal) continued thus:

"Report says, that Lady Honoria Forrester is double-faced; that she is fond of cultivating acquaintances, not from a real esteem, but for amusement; to turn them into ridicule to their face, and laugh at them behind their backs——."

"I don't believe it!" interrupted the Curate.

"Of course not. No one would believe it, to judge by appearance She seems candour itself. But I assure you, Mr. Weatherly, that is Lady Honoria's character, among her own London set, where I had the pleasure—I should say the honour—of being presented to her ladyship. I know perfectly well, Lady Forrester, as an Earl's daughter, is my social superior—ahem—at present. It may not be always so. When my merits are properly recognised—when I have achieved distinc-

tion, as the leader of the Movement for Women, or possibly even before then, when I——"

Miss Wildgoose stopped rather abruptly, like one on the eve of letting out a secret, and then continued:

"But never mind, I don't want to talk about myself. Whatever I may be, at present, I recognise Lady Honoria as my conventional superior. However, she sought my acquaintance. I did not seek her ladyship's. Lady Honoria professed to be interested in the Movement for Women, and asked me down here, ostensibly to learn all about it. Now, I had heard that Lady Honoria makes a practice of asking those whom she considers odd people, and her social inferiors, down to Laxington House, to amuse her, and her patrician papa, in the intervals of hunting, and other cruel sports in winter, She acts thus for two reasons of the control of the thus, for two reasons; first, as I have said, she derives pleasure from drawing them out, and playing them off. Secondly, both she and the Earl get the reputation of being affable, and condescending below their rank, and thus obtain popularity at a cheap rate. They have an eye to the elections. I must confess. Mr. Weatherport, that my brief personal experience has tended to confirm the truth of these reports. You, yourself, saw and heard how grossly I was insulted at Kettledrum, last evening, by Captain Rasper, who writes foolish, fast, sporting novels; and by that antiquated Adonis, that fat Fop, that Sprig of Nobility, Lord Oddfish, who certainly does not belie his name. Well, I have no doubt, Lady Honoria tutored, and set them both on. It was all carefully arranged beforehand——"

"Miss Wildgoose," the Curate sternly interrupted—"You have no right to say that. I saw and heard all. There is no ground for any such imputation on Lady Honoria. No one, with any pretensions to be a lady, could have acted so cruel, so vulgar a

part."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. All-weather. I sincerely hope I did her ladyship an injustice in suspecting her at least of a premeditated insult. I do hope she is not so bad as that. But if Lady Honoria did not instigate those two gentlemen to insult me, she enjoyed the insult amazingly. That you can't deny, Mr. Weatherby. We saw her and the other ladies, laughing heartily at that conceited jackanapes Captain Rasper, dressed up, and aping a woman."

"But, Miss Wildgoose, as I observed to you at the time, you ought not to take seriously what was meant as a harmless joke. Captain Rasper did not imitate you, but an American lady. You, an English lady, need not make yourself responsible for all her peculiarities of

diction."

"I know that very well, Mr. Weatherly, but the satire was levelled at me and the Movement for Women, through his contemptible caricature of Dr. Melissa Mangleman."

"Still, you should not let such a trifle annoy

you."

- "No, indeed! I despise the fellow too much for that. You heard me tell him my opinion plump and plain, and you saw how keenly he felt it."
- "Forgive him like a Christian, Miss Wildgoose."
- "Thank you, Mr. Weatherton. I do forgive him like a Christian. I bear him no malice. I fancy he got the worst of it. He will not attack me again in a hurry. I will pay him off, the first chance I get I bide my time. Only let me get hold of one of his trashy, horsey novels to review! He knows much more about horses, than about women. But I see his game. He makes up to Miss Heartfree for her fortune, while flirting desperately with the other three ladies. So much for Captain Rasper. Now for his confederate, Lord Oddfish. You will not believe what I am going to tell you about him, Mr. Weatherley. He is an odd fish, and no mistake. Though old enough to be Lady Honoria's father, the old Satyr thinks he has some chance of winning her ladyship's hand!"

"No-really-you don't say so!" said the

Curate, with genuine astonishment.

"I thought I should surprise you. A man at his age, who has lived so fast, who still drinks like a fish, in spite of repeated warnings from gout; never distinguished for anything but dissipation, and with only a younger son's paltry allowance! Is it not ridiculous, Mr. Weatherstorm?"

Even Miss Wildgoose was astonished at the

Curate's hearty and emphatic response.

"So very ridiculous that I cannot credit it. What! aspire to the hand of Lady Honoria! You must surely be mistaken, Miss Wildgoose."

- "Not at all mistaken You don't know the vanity of men, and of this particular man. 'There is no fool like an old fool,' Mr. Weatherport. And mark my words. Lord Oddfish will some day make a greater ass of himself than he is at present, by proposing to Lady Honoria. But it is not altogether his fault. Such an insane idea would never have entered his besotted brain, but for the encouragement he receives."
- "How? Encouragement? Lady Honoria cannot intend to marry him?"
- "No more than she intends to marry her father's coachman, from whom she receives tete à-tete lessons in driving; or her groom, with whom she rides out alone."
- "But you said encouragement. Lady Honoria cannot love him?"
- "No more than she loves you, or the fox she has gone out to worry to death. Amiable, feminine, ladylike amusement! Lady Honoria loves nobody at present. But, Mr. Weatherton, her ladyship is so fond of flirtation, that she

would flirt with a centenarian, if there were no younger man present. That is her ladyship's besetting sin, her foible, her fault, her weak point, or her strong point, if you prefer the term. She is—to tell the truth—at present an arrant coquette."

The Curate heaved a deep sigh and said, "She is very young, and has no mother."
"That's exactly where it is. Upon my

word, Mr. Weatherstorm, you have hit the nail upon the head. Very young, and no mother! That is partly, mainly I may say, the cause of my being here. Lady Honoria stands sadly in need of some chaperon—some sincere well-wisher, and adviser of her own sex. Now, it occurred to me, that I could, as they say, kill two birds with one stone. I could enlighten Lady Honoria on the Move-ment for Women, and at the same time give her a few hints as to her conduct—watch over her, be a kind of mother to her. Pray, don't misunderstand me, Mr. Allweather. I don't mean I am old enough to be her mother. That is but a figure of speech, I may say. But I have seen much of the world. I am a close observer—a great judge of character. I have considerable tact, and I prophesy that if Lady Honoria remain without a true female friend, she will get herself into very serious trouble."

Possibly at this moment the vision of his nightmare recurred to the Curate. He said with great emotion: "Your motives do you credit, Miss Wildgoose."

"Thanks for your good opinion, Mr. Weatherly. As you have confidence in me, permit me to give you a hint. Does it occur to you that in invitingy ou to Laxington House, Lady Honoria desired only the pleasure of your company? That she had no deeper design?"

The Curate started. His tormentor continued: "I am given to understand you preached a most eloquent sermon last Sunday against Field Sports! Lady Honoria is a Di Vernon! Do you really think she has taken a sudden fancy to you, for preaching against fox-hunting, her favourite amusement, next to man-hunting?"

"I think her ladyship shows great magnanimity, and Christian charity, in not only not bearing malice, but in holding out the olive branch, and showing me hospitality, under such circumstances."

"Oh! you think that, Mr. Weatherton?" "I do."

Miss Wildgoose laughed outright, a hard, sneering, unpleasant laugh, which meant: What a fool you must be. She said: "You believe, then, that Lady Honoria has forgiven you? Take care, Mr. Weatherton. Her ladyship is most gracious now. But remember the song in 'Hyperion.' It runs thus, I think:

'I know a maiden, fair to see;
Take care!
She can both false and friendly be.
Beware! Beware!
Trust her not,
She is fooling thee!'

'Verbum sapienti.' I need say no more, Mr. Weatherborn. Why, I declare, here we are positively, at Snippets and Fringes, the Drapers, in the High Street. How your fluent conversation has beguiled the time! You are a most delightful companion, Mr. Weatherborn. Au revoir."

And Miss Wildgoose took leave of the Curate, with a graceful bend, which had done execution in days of yore, and was probably intended to do more! Though Miss Wildgoose flew at much higher game than Curates. Her tongue had moved like a mill-clapper. She had talked incessantly. The Curate had only edged in a word occasionally. He went away "a sadder and a wiser man." He had learned more of the wickedness of human nature, in a forty minutes' walk with Miss Wildgoose, than in a whole year of his ordinary simple experience. She had never called him by his right name! She had wrung his heart, by depreciating Lady Honoria's sincerity. She had very nearly let out her secret, that she wished to become a step-mother to Lady Honoria. Yet, if asked his opinion of Miss Wildgoose, the Curate would have defined her, as a trifle crochetty and peppery, but a good, honest, single-minded, straightforward, warm-hearted, unselfish woman! The good man judged others by himself!

CHAPTER IV.

RESULTS OF GOING INTO SOCIETY!

Would it have been ill, or well, for the Curate, to have been invisibly present that day at the fox-chase, and at the late lounging breakfast at Laxington House, next morning? To have known the hearty peal of laughter which followed Rasper's imitation of his (the Curate's) solemn pedantic manner, and Lady Honoria's announcement of her determination to make him eat his words, might have cured the Curate of his incipient love-fever. Perhaps not! He might have become more infatuated than ever.

"Mark me," said her ladyship, clenching her beautiful hand, with unconscious energy during breakfast; "you will never hear another sermon from that man, against Aristocratic Field Sports."

"Honoria, my love," said the Earl, smiling at her earnestness; "just clasp the handle of the coffee-pot long enough to pour me out another cup. You mean the Curate, Mr. a—a—what's his name?"

"Weatherall, papa."

"Oh, then, you did not scold him too severely? He was not offended?"

"Offended. No, indeed. I can answer for that," said Captain Rasper. "I beg to congratulate your ladyship on another conquest." "Lady Forrester is used to conquests," said

Lord Oddfish.

"Like Old Weller and the widders, she don't take no pride out on't. Of men, she may adopt Cæsar's words: Veni, vidi, vici. Her ladyship can't help making conquests, and thinks no more of another slave attached to her chariot's wheels, than I do of the shell of this egg."

"Lord Oddfish, you know what Beatrice said to Benedick. I wonder you will still be talking, Signor Benedick; nobody minds

vou."

"And yet she married him!" returned Lord

Oddfish significantly.

"Perhaps" said Captain Rasper "Lady Forrester does take some pride out of this, her latest conquest—a clergyman and a good man."

"And no fool either" said Lord Oddfish "although he is as green as grass. Good abilities. Well educated. Classical scholar."

"Make a capital coach for people with

short memories, fond of quoting."

"Meaning me. Thanks, Rasper, I owe you one. Well, the poor fellow is regularly smitten. Cela va sans dire. We are all in the same boat."

"How can you be so foolish" said Lady Honoria, blushing slightly. Although VOL. I.

woman of fashion, she could blush. She added: "But I am determined to make him recant his hunting heresies,—if I can."

"Oh! he is already penitent" said Captain Rasper. "I expect to see him at our next

meet."

"Do you really think so?"

"He gave your ladyship a half promise. What do you say my lord?" Two to one in ponies, he comes to the meet."

"No, thank you, Rasper I never bet, unless I feel sure of winning."

- "If he comes to the meet" said Lady Honoria "the battle's half won. He will not merely ride to covert, but follow the hounds."
 - "Possibly—in six months."

"More likely in less than six weeks."

The Earl, while munching his toast, and occasionally glancing at his newspaper, had not lost the conversation. He now struck in.

"Upon my word, Honoria, you are a mon-

strously clever girl."

"I believe you, my — lord" said Lord Oddfish, checking himself just in time, in applying Paul Bedford's slang phrase.

Even as it was, the familiarity seemed offensive. The Earl looked somewhat severely at Lord Oddfish, and continued:—"I confess I did not see your drift in asking the-ahem-Curate of Laxington to dinner. I thought you intended to scold the poor man."

"And thereby render him the confirmed

enemy of Field Sports, and our Order—" exclaimed Lady Honoria, interrupting her father without ceremony—" Pas si bete, nôtre cher

père. Scolding would have spoiled all."

The Earl reciprocated his guests' looks of admiration. Miss Wildgoose was the only exception. As he gazed on his handsome dashing daughter, he wondered, with a father's pride, whether there existed a man worthy to be her husband? Possibly, the Earl secretly regretted the arrangement, that she should marry her cousin—heir to the title, and estate. Though she would have only £200 a year, Lady Honoria might have looked higher. Miss Wildgoose had been watching her opportunity to play her *motherly* part. She now observed, with dignified severity:
"Meantime, what is sport to you, may be

death to the Curate."

"Do you refer to the risk of breaking his neck in hunting?" said Lord Oddfish.

"That risk is certainly on the cards, as you betting noblemen and military gentlemen say," retorted Miss Wildgoose "but I don't mean that kind of death. Lady Forrester knows very well to what I allude."

"Indeed, Miss Wildgoose, I do not."

"It's all years well trying to look upon

"It's all very well trying to look unconcerned, my lady, but Captain Rasper and Lord Oddfish have just congratulated you upon your new conquest, and have added that you were used to it, and thought nothing of another slave."

"Pshaw, madam, you surely don't take all that au sérieux."

"If it only depended on the testimony of Captain Rasper, and Lord Oddfish, I should attach no importance to it."

"One for you Rasper, and one for me,"

said Lord Oddfish playfully.

"But," continued Miss Wildgoose "you yourself, Lady Forrester, boast your influence to make the poor man—Mr. Weatherstorm, recant his convictions avowed from the pulpit. In other words, to parade him before the world, as a renegade and traitor!"

"No, no, only a rational being."

But Miss Wildgoose, warming to her work, was not to be diverted from her indictment. She continued. "Your ladyship has just prophesied that in less than six weeks, Mr. Weatherhorn will be following the hounds. He will then be your slave, your tame cat, or snake. Has your ladyship condescended to

think what you will do with him?"

"Why, he will take his place among hundreds of Lady Forrester's devoted admirers," said Captain Rasper. "He is no more to be pitied than we are."

Miss Wildgoose continued: "Mr. Weather-

more is not one of the minions and butterflies of fashion, a mere hanger-on, diner-out, and parasite of London Society, a lounger at the Clubs" (here she gave a withering look at Captain Rasper), "or a poor old sprig of nobility, too idle to work, one of the *Fruges*

consumere nati" (another withering look at Lord Oddfish). "If Mr. Weatherstorm were one of that bad lot, I should have no sympathy for him. But he is a clergyman—a good man, and singularly ignorant of the world. All which ought to plead in his favour, with those possessed of common pity."

Lady Honoria shrugged her beautiful shoulders, with real or affected indignation.

The Earl cut into the conversation.

"Do you really mean to imply, madam, that a—a penniless Curate—on a stipend of £100, or £150 per annum, would so far forget his station as to—to—"

The Earl stopped and gasped! He could not find words to convey such an appalling thought. A Curate daring to fall in love with the Earl of Laxington's only child! He tried again. "Yes, madam, do you think that this Mr. a—a—What's his name, would have the temerity to-to-raise his eyes to-Lady Forrester?"

"Yes, my lord, I do, and why not? A cat may look at a king. Curates have married dukes' daughters. Mr. Weatherton is a gentleman, and a clergyman, and an eloquent preacher, with the courage of his opinions. He may rise in the Church, and become a Dean, Archdeacon or a Bishop."

"But now he is only a Curate, and should

not aspire above his station."

"Quite so, my lord," said Lord Oddfish. He ought to set the Laity a good example; practise what he preaches; and do his duty in that state of life, to which it has pleased God to call him."

The Earl looked hard at Lord Oddfish, not

sure whether he was in jest or earnest.
"Lord Oddfish!" said Miss Wildgoose, "you are rather unfortunate in your quotations."

"Not now, madam, I have quoted the

Catechism correctly."

"Excuse me, my lord, you have not."

"I will bet I have."

"Ladies do not bet. At least," added Miss Wildgoose, "Sporting ladies, and other ladies of your lordship's acquaintance, may! If Mr. Witherhorn were here, he would correct your lordship."

"If you know I'm wrong, why don't you

correct me yourself?"

"I shall, my lord. You garbled the text, as you do most of your quotations. It runs thus: 'to do my duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call me.' "

"Permit me to verify that."

"By all means, my lord. It is no doubt long since you read it," retorted Miss Wildgoose.

"Overhaul Catechism, and when found, make a note of it," said Captain Rasper.

A prayer-book was consulted. Lord Oddfish, though eccentric, was well-bred. He said:

"Miss Wildgoose, you are right. I am wrong. Thanks for your correction."
Miss Wildgoose bowed, and continued: "Observe the distinction between the two readings. Dissipated men, and infidels who rail at the clergy, continually and purposely misquote the passage, to imply that clergy and Christians generally should vegetate through life, without ambition. But the true reading is, as you see, perfectly compatible with a proper, and legitimate ambition, both for laity and clergy!"

Flushed with her triumph, Miss Wildgoose continued, addressing the Earl, "Mr. Witherington has excellent abilities, and can be a most agreeable companion. I speak from experience. He accompanied me through the park yesterday to Laxington. I had no conception of his conversational powers. He was so fluent and entertaining, that forty minutes seemed but five."

"You astonish me," said Mrs. Rippington,
"I thought him rather shy and retiring."
"That was because he found himself, for

the first time in his life, in such fashionable society. With me, he felt at home, and was quite chatty and conversible. I drew him out. He talked, I listened."

"You are sure it was not the other way?"

said Lady Honoria archly.

The remark provoked a laugh.

Miss Wildgoose replied: "I am always happy to listen to gentlemen, and ladies, who

have anything to teach me! Mrs. Rippington's remark supports my conviction, that Mr. Winterhalter does know his station, and would never think of aspiring above it—if let alone! But there is such a thing as unfair encouragement. Coquetry is woman's bane—especially of fashionable high-born ladies. What was the name of that unhappy young man, the other day (Townley, I think), who actually shot the young lady who jilted him for a curate? Such a shocking crime should warn all women how they play with hearts." Miss Wildgoose gazed steadily at Lady Honoria, and declaimed the last verse of "Lady Clara Vere de Vere."

"Clara, Clara Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands?
Oh, teach the orphan boy to read,
Or teach the orphan girl to sew,
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let the SIMPLE CURATE go!

Decidedly, in all animals—notably in the human species—Blood will tell! A low-lived woman, under such irresistible provocation, springs like a tigress on her insulter. A tradesman's wife takes refuge in bad language. Even an ordinary middle-class lady might have expressed her fury in taunts, which would probably have resulted in a vulgar quarrel. Even those well-bred people appeared to expect a scene. For there

is a degree of outrage which will overcome human patience. The guests gazed at one another, and at Lady Honoria, in mute astonishment that she was able to keep her temper. Never, perhaps, had Lady Honoria found it more difficult to remember the restraints imposed by the duties of hospitality. Never, perhaps, had she found it so difficult to repress the angry retort which trembled on her lips. Never, perhaps, was her aristocratic breeding more taxed. Philosophy, Good-Breeding, Christianity unite in teaching the same lesson: "A soft answer turneth away wrath." The struggle was terrible. But Lady Honoria came out victorious. She remained silent for the space of two minutes, and then said calmly: "Miss Wildgoose, your tea is cold. Pray let me offer you another cup!"

"No—thanks!"

The negative of Miss Wildgoose showed far less self-command, than Lady Honoria's inquiry. The gentlemen seemed to breathe more freely. Their looks testified their admiration. The ladies were not so demonstrative. Possibly they knew a little more about the situation.

Womanly tact enabled Lady Honoria and her lady guests, to penetrate Miss Wildgoose's secret. That lady plumed herself on seeing into other people's motives. It never occurred to her, that her own might be equally transparent. Lady Honoria, and the

other ladies perceived that Miss Wildgoose was trying to captivate the Earl. She was a well preserved woman of forty-five, but she trusted far more to mental cultivation, than to personal graces. Lady Honoria was more amused than angry. From the length of time her father had remained a widower, she time her father had remained a widower, she thought it very unlikely he would marry again—certainly not, while his daughter remained with him. When Lady Honoria fulfilled her destiny, and married, it was possible the Earl might relieve his loneliness, by second nuptials. But Lady Honoria was convinced that her father would never think convinced that her father would never think seriously of a woman like Miss Wildgoose. Consequently, instead of resenting her presumption, Lady Honoria had actually invited her, for the express purpose of affording opportunity to develope her scheme. Her ladyship promised herself and her lady guests much amusement, in watching the strongminded lady's arts to entrap the Earl! Lady Honoria anticipated that when her father's eyes were once opened, Miss Wildgoose would receive a lesson, never to be forgotten! Here, then, was the true explanation of Lady Honoria's remarkable meekness at breakfast. The gentlemen wondered over the enigma, that a woman so high-spirited as Lady Honoria, should tolerate such rudeness from Miss Wildgoose? The ladies congratulated Lady Honoria, upon her admirable self-control, on which so much depended. For it was evident that, had a quarrel taken place Miss Wildgoose would have abruptly ended her visit. The guests would have lost the pleasure of watching the gradual development of her plan, and the lesson to herself involved in the dénouement.

The Curate returned to his mother. He had left home on Thursday at four p.m. He returned on Friday at noon. A brief period, of only twenty hours. Yet in that period how much he had lived, what vistas of life had opened to him? It was an experience of a new world, cutting his existence into two distinct portions, almost completely severing the past from the future. Bulwer truly says: "We live six volumes in a day!" Though outwardly the same as ever, this wonderful episode had mentally operated a vast change. He returned to Hope Cottage, in propriâ personâ. His mother knew his knock, opened the door embraced him and opened the door, embraced him, and asked him many questions, which he required time to answer. His heart was "far away," at a fox-hunt. Such was the poor man's infatuation, that he even meditated mounting his horse, and riding out to meet, perchance, Lady Honoria and her party, on their return.

"Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit." But he was not mad. He was not vet in love. Common sense soon rejected the idea of going forth to meet the aristocratic party. To get laughed at! To receive a chilling bow. What else could he expect? And yet Miss Wildgoose's last words rankled in his mind. He went out, and bought a copy of Longfellow's "Hyperion," to read the poem from which she had quoted. And then he began to form good resolutions. "Forewarned is forearmed!" He would throw himself into his parochial work, "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, keep himself unspotted from the world." Then he would be able to banish Lady Honoria from his thoughts. Then he could defy her ladyship to play with his offections. They lived in different worlds. What had he to do with cultivating the acquaintance of an Earl's daughter?

the acquaintance of an Earl's daughter?

"A brave man struggling with calamity, is a sight worthy of the gods," observes Seneca. But perhaps a still grander sight, is a good man earnestly striving to do his duty, under irresistible temptations. "But," cry stern moralists: "the Curate might have done his duty, if he had really tried!" Let these stern moralists "perpend." It is sometimes very difficult, first, to know what is our duty, and next, to do it. It is very easy to say, the Curate could have broken off all further acquaintance with Lady Honoria, if he liked! Yes; but who does like to break off all acquaintance with an Earl's daughter, when she happens to be young, beautiful, and bent upon continuing that acquaintance? Such "Admirable Crichtons" may exist among our

Clergy and Laity, but I have not the happiness of knowing any. Candidly, could the Curate break off his acquaintance with Lady Honoria, with common decency? He had only to break his promise of going to see the picture-gallery at Laxington House; leave unfulfilled his half-promise to attend a meet of foxhounds; never call at a House where he had dined; and if by any chance he met Lady Honoria, turn his head another way, or look straight in her face without recognition. He had only to "cut" Lady Honoria. He had only to show himself a churl, a brute, a bear. And probably he and her ladyship would become entire strangers. Was it his duty to be a churl, a brute, a bear? Bulwer Lytton observes: "Well-bred people never cut one another."

"But," persist our stern moralists, "he might still continue his acquaintance with Lady Honoria; resist her allurements, defy her coquettish arts; and not fall in love with her!" Better and better. How then do people ever fall in love? What mere man, unless already in love, ever yet resisted the influence of a beautiful woman? And then, fire fights fire. The Curate might have defied Lady Honoria's attractions, had he been an angel in human shape, or one of those impossibly good, and colourless heroes we meet with, never in real life, but in some novels; people who never go wrong, because they can never voluntarily go right. Such

things are really incapable of vice or virtue. Not human at all, but poor puppets, which point no moral, and only display their authors' vanity and ignorance. My hero is a Man, not a machine! The struggle between Duty and Inclination, forms an interesting study in human nature. "Ye, whose claycold lips and lukewarm hearts can argue down or mask your passions, tell me, what trespass is it that man should have them? or how his spirit stands answerable to the Father of Spirits, but for his conduct under them?" (Sterne).

The Curate did struggle to do his duty, but he was heavily handicapped. For example, his dear Mother even appeared to be unconsciously, an accomplice of Lady Honoria and the World! Mrs. Weatherall rejoiced at her son's introduction to such good Society. She heartily enjoyed his graphic description of the guests, the dinner, the affability of the Earl and Lady Honoria. It never entered then, into the artless mind of the old lady, that his beautiful, accomplished, high-born hostess could ever be anything more than a parishioner to her darling son. At supper, he asked with cunning simplicity: "Will it be necessary to call at Laxington House, mother?"

"Can you ask that question seriously, William? Of course, every gentleman calls at a house where he has dined. Quite independantly of meeting such agreeable people,

it would be positively churlish to omit such a mere matter of etiquette."

"Ah, yes, a mere matter of etiquette!"

"It would be your duty to call, even if you knew you would not be admitted."

"I see."

- "If you did not leave your card at Laxington House, after the hospitality you received there, the Earl would think you a churl."
 - "I do not think the Earl would care."
- "Well, but Lady Honoria, so affable, and so well-bred; who showed such wonderful command of temper, when you broke that beautiful china-cup, and spoilt the set—William, how could you be so clumsy? You surely would not wish to appear a churl in her eyes—to say nothing of her guests?"

"No, I should not, indeed," said the Curate, who could hardly conceal his delight.

"When should I call, mother?"

"Well, some very particular persons call the day after. That is too soon. That hardly gives the hostess time to recover from

the fatigue of entertaining her guests."

The Curate could not help smiling, as he replied: "My dear mother, Lady Honoria leaves all household cares to her housekeeper, and a retinue of servants. As to fatigue, Lady Honoria has returned from hunting to-day, able to entertain any number of guests. Seeing company is her daily routine."

"She must be a most wonderful young

lady!"

"You may well say so. If you only knew her, heard her speak, laugh, sing and play, and saw her smile——!"

The Curate checked himself just in time. If he had continued, even his mother might have had her suspicions. As it was, the

simple lady replied:

"I doubt I shall never have that honour, William. Lady Forrester is just one of the great Ones of the Earth. The proper time to call is, I think, about the third day. At any rate within the week."

"Thanks, mother!"

The Curate's conscience said:—"Yes, you ought to call at Laxington House. But——there is no necessity for you to see the woman who has bewitched you, and seeks to alter the calm current of your peaceful, useful life. Lady Honoria hunts twice a week. The days of meets of hounds, are announced in the local journals. Call on one of these days." In theory, nothing could be more easy. The Curate might have called, heard the truth, that Lady Honoria was not at home, and left his card. Thus, he would have fulfilled the requirement of etiquette. And the acquaint-ance might have ended there—if so desired by her Ladyship! If a further invitation came, the Curate could decline. But "then, and in that case" the story would end along with the acquaintance! Inclination coun-

selled:—"To call on a hunting-day, will be foolish and rude. You will miss an interview with a beautiful, accomplished woman. And you will indirectly insult Lady Honoria. For she will conclude that, by calling on a day when you knew she would be absent, you did not wish to see her!" Inclination carried the day. The Curate called on a bye day. Lady Honoria had given directions that she was not to be denied. He was admitted, spent a couple of hours with the ladies in the picture-gallery; talked well, stayed to lunch, and did not get away until he had pledged his word to be present at a meet of foxhounds!

He had a desperate struggle about keeping his word. There was no time specified. He thought often of recanting. At the end of a week, came a scented billet reminding the Curate of his promise, and saying that Lady Honoria and her friends, fully expected him to meet them at covert-side. Possibly, had his mother known the contents of that billet, she would have put it in the fire. She did not see her son press the note to his lips. She did not know, till long afterwards, that he enclosed it in a little silken bag, and wore it next his heart! The Curate thought he would compromise. He could not all at once screw up his courage, to be seen at a meet of foxhounds. But on hunting days, he rode out in the afternoon, and lurked in the roads through which Lady Honoria and party would return to Laxington House. By these

tactics, he met her ladyship and friends several times. Lady Honoria made him ride beside her, and scolded him for not keeping his word. He frankly owned he lacked the moral courage to be seen at a fox-hunt, after

having denounced it from the pulpit.

Lady Honoria said: "You will show your moral courage, by despising public opinion, if the thing be not wrong in itself. Are people never to change their minds? Besides," she added with a mischievous smile, "I fear your character for consistency, is already seriously damaged. You are riding by my side. I am known as an inveterate fox-hunter. And to-day I have the brush in my hat! Everyone who meets us, gives you the credit of having gone to the meet, possibly of having followed the hounds! If you do come to covert-side at our next meet, you will only be seen by a greater number. Besides, we have your promise!"

The ladies supported Lady Honoria, and Miss Heartfree said: "Why can't you come? What hinders you?" Had the Curate been acquainted with the French Classical Drama, he might, with propriety, have parodied Nero's words in Racine's "Britannicus":

"All! my Mother, the Rector, my own words, Laxington, and three whole years of Duty."

Within a month from the memorable dinner at Laxington House, the Curate did appear at a meet of foxhounds. He thought the matter over like Widow Wadman. I can never go to a meet of foxhounds! What would the world say if I went? I will go! It was not difficult, with the help of Lady Honoria and others, to persuade himself that his real reason was to see the sport, which he had so unsparingly condemned, merely from hearsay and reading. After all, had he not rashly denounced this, our great National Sport? He would be impartial, and look at both sides of the question. Men who prided themselves on never changing their minds, were narrow, conceited, and vain.

The hounds met at Heatherly Hill. The Curate was punctual, and saw the whole field assemble in the valley, and slowly ascend the hill, to the number of about one hundred riders. After the pack, huntsman, and whippers-in, the Earl led the way, with the ladies and gentlemen from Laxington House. Lady Honoria, in chimney-pot hat and dark green habit, looked like Diana, with attendant nymphs. The cavalcade formed a most imposing sight. Lady Honoria, flushed with exercise, looked more lovely than ever. She greeted the Curate most graciously. So did the ladies and gentlemen from Laxington House. The Earl bowed. Most of the horsemen, the nobility, and gentry of the neighbourhood, regarded the Curate curiously and superciliously. Their looks seemed to say, "Well, what business have you here? Have you come to gather evidence for another sermon against hunting?" Some

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whispered and laughed. One gentleman asked him, if he intended to "follow the hounds."

And now the music of the hounds made the covert ring. Horses curvetted and pranced. Riders pressed their hats firmly on their temples, ready for the expected burst. Lady Honoria was all animation, but calm and collected, amid the excitement and confusion. The huntsman appealed to the "mob of gentlemen" to come away from that side of the covert, from which the fox would certainly break. Some took the hint. Others did not. The American, Mr. Spry, was soundly rated for attempting to head the "durned skunk," as he called the fox. Reynard dashed out of covert, followed by the pack, amid a storm of cries of "Gone Away!" "Hold Hard!" "Ware Hounds!" The huntsman and whippers-in were in agony, lest any of their favourites should be trampled to death, or maimed by horses' hoofs. A sweet voice said, "Good-bye, Mr. Weatherall." The Curate recognised Lady Honoria, as she dashed past, in the first flight In five minutes, all the plunging and trampling were over. The hunt was out of sight.

The Curate was left—not quite alone. There was one other horseman, who did not attempt to follow the hounds—the Rector of Laxington! Somehow, the Curate felt shy of facing him. Neither clergyman had a right to reproach the other. Yet the Rector

was consistent. The Curate was not! The Rector laughed—as the Curate fancied, contemptuously. He felt himself in a false position, to be abashed before the Rector!

The Curate began a kind of apology:-"Lady Forrester expressed a wish that I

would attend a meet.____"

"Of course, her ladyship's wishes are commands."

"I want to be impartial—you know—to see both sides of the question——"

"Exactly!" said the Rector, drily. They rode together, only half a mile. Their

respective ways soon parted.

As he pursued his solitary ride home, the Curate's meditations were of an entirely novel character. He thought not of Dame Howlett's rheumatism, of his poor, of blankets and coals, of solacing the sick and dying. He thought of the sight he had just witnessed; of the meet at which he had assisted, for the first time. After all, fox-hunting was a grand sport! It required pluck. It stirred the blood. It excited emulation. And then it was not open to the objections against deer, and hare-hunting. These were cruel and wicked, because deer and hares could be slaughtered for food, at once, by being shot. But the fox was vermin, a "skunk," as the American, Mr. Spry, called him. The fox must be hunted, or exterminated. Therefore, fox-hunting was kind to the fox, and in all other respects, a good, virtuous salutary

amusement. Hounds and horses delighted in it. True, they were sometimes trampled, and ridden to death. And riders sometimes broke their necks. These events were exceptions. The Curate panted to follow the hunt, to show some of these supercilious noodles (who despised him, because he wore a black coat) that he was their equal, perhaps their superior in manhood, and could ride as straight to hounds. Wrong perhaps, but human! And Lady Honoria—he thought her even more beautiful in the hunting field, than in her own drawing room. But he was not sure. She seemed really glad to see him. Even the Earl looked pleased. But the Curate fancied there was a mocking tone in her "Good-bye."

Then Imagination took the reins from Judgment. He fancied himself mounted on a thoroughbred, riding side by side, with Lady Honoria; taking hedges, ditches, five-bar gates together, leading the hunt, passing the best riders, in at the death, and privileged to fix the "brush" in her hat. Latterly he had begun to suspect that Lady Honoria attributed his expressed aversion to fox hunting, to physical fear. And that he sourly condemned the "risky" sport he feared to share. Was it possible that so fair a being did suspect him of being a coward and hypocrite? Yet, he had faced death in fever-stricken cottages, where these "plucky" fox hunters dared not show their faces!

What a triumph over them, to face death in the hunting-field! Perhaps he had gone too far in preaching against fox-hunting? He should have excepted this from the Fieldsports he had condemned. To call un-Christian, was to stigmatise thousands of men and women. If ladies hunted, why should not parsons hunt? Parsons wanted exercise. They might preach better sermons, if they hunted once a week. And there was something in what Lady Honoria said, about the presence of clergymen imposing some moral restraint. True; wherever horses and dogs were congregated, there was bad language. He had heard oaths that day. But why should it be so? The presence of parsons might bring about a gradual reform. If fox-hunting were not wrong for Christians, it was not wrong for Clergymen. It was a question of expediency. Strait-laced people would deprive parsons of all recreations. The world's opinion—he had thought too much of it. He would brave it. All for Love, or the world's opinion well lost. And in all this day-dream, the infatuated young man thought not of one who, until his visit to Laxington House, had been, his pole star and guardian angel-his Mother!

CHAPTER V.

THE SHATTERED IDOL!

Some philosophers have thought Life a dream, from which we awake at Death! very great change had come over the spirit of the Curate's dream. It would unnecessarily harrow up the reader's soul, to paint, touch by touch, all the details of his existence, since he had fallen under the Circean spell of that fell enchantress Lady Honoria. Nct that my Classical simile must be taken in its strict literal truth. The Curate was indeed metamorphosed—but not into a brute! if anything, it was rather the other way. He had been (in the opinion of some people) stupid, slow, a very queer animal, a poor creature, a mere country curate! He had been looked down upon, very much as Adam Smith was, by his housekeeper. She said he never would be anything but a philosopher! If it be true, that Adam Smith had been seen watching his opportunity, to steal a lump from his own sugar-basin, perhaps she was right to despise him! The Curate was no longer the same man. He had been merely a man. Now he was rapidly becoming a fine gentleman. It was curious and edifying, to hear the conflict of opinions respecting him. Those who had hailed with

delight, his outspoken sermon against Field Sports, reckoned him up, as a lost man, a turncoat, a trimmer, a traitor, a wretched time-server, and preferment hunter. He had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage! The Earl of Laxington had promised him a living, on condition that he remained silent on the subject of Field Sports!

Mr. Gnatstrainer capped the climax; outheroded Herod. Nothing was too false, too vile for him to say of the man, who had humbled and exposed him. While actually rejoicing over the Curate's "fall," the Supralapsarian converted Calvinist grocer made Little Bethel ring with denunciations of the lapsed sinner, the son of Belial, who had now shown his own character, and that of the whitewashed sepulchre, the State Church, in their true light! He never wearied of this theme. His ignorant hearers did not perceive his inconsistency. For in one breath, he spoke of the Curate as a lost sheep, a castaway, " another good man gone wrong." In the next, he denounced him as a hypocrite, and thanked "Gorde," that the wolf in sheep's clothing, now stood stripped of his disguise, a warning to the world! Then the preacher wiped the perspiration from his face, and varied the form of his blasphemy, into what he called a prayer! He supplicated that this pore, misguided, infatuated young man might become humble, through the consciousness of his sin. That he who had aspired to teach

others, and to undertake the cure of others' souls, might perceive, before it was too late, the foul leprosy tainting his own unregenerate soul, and, like the leper of old, might smite upon his breast and cry aloud, "Unclean! Unclean!" After plainly intimating his own conviction, that the Curate was past praying for, utterly given over and lost, the Calvinist explained it was possible that "Gorde" might give one last chance to this great sinner, this heavy backslider; and concluded with the following directions to Omnipotence. "We would have Thee save him, L-o-ard! That he may be convinced of the error of his ways, ere he break his neck in the 'untin'-field, or meet with some other suddent judgment which he has so richly deserved. Gather him in, L-o-ard, but not agin to the Scarlet Lady of Canterbury, that State Church, whose worldly principles he now so signally illustrates, by sitting late with wine-bibbers, and striking hands with the world, the flesh, and the devil; but unto huz, Thy peccoliar people, whom he has hitherto, in his carnal wisdom, mocked, scorned, derided, abused, and persecuted; to huz, whom it hath pleased Thee to set up as a beacon, a burning and a shining light, in this dark spot of yearth." In short, Mr. Gnatstrainer's supplication, though in form a prayer, sounded, both in matter and manner, far more like an imprecation! It was an inversion of Balaam's parable. Certainly, the Calvinist seemed rather to curse, than to bless

the Curate. Such is the result of extemporary preaching and prayer, quite untrammeled by a State Church or hierarchy! The human heart is left perfectly free to expose all its natural beauty, and all its natural—malignity! "The Wild Curate" was a most attractive theme. A collection was always taken up. A plate held pertinaciously under their noses, forced the most disgusted, to give reluctantly. It might be truly said:

"And those who came to scoff, remained to pay!"

Mr. Gnatstrainer's lungs were sound. He bellowed at the top of his voice. Captain Rasper assisted at one of these exercises. Next morning, at breakfast, he read aloud some original lines which amused the company. The last couplet ran thus:

"Not sense, but sound, tests Little Bethel's wares, And thunder rolls unheard, amid their prayers!"

Those who had considered the Curate as a saint, now rushed into the other extreme. But there was a common-sense party, who, while disbelieving in the existence of Saints in human form, had always given the Curate credit for being a good man. These reasonable people saw more of the truth, and defended him against misrepresentation. The poor lad, they said, young in years, and a child in worldly ways, had fallen in love with Lady Honoria Forrester. She was responsible for the change in his habits. As for the Curate, his head was

more in fault, than his heart. Her ladyship would let him drop some day. Then his eyes would open to his folly.

Fast hunting-men were indignant and amused at the Curate's impudence, to presume to fall in love with a lady of rank, though not of fortune. They said:—"Some day, when Lady Honoria got tired of the wretched earwig, she would let him down the wind to prey at fortune, as she had others. Serve the dashed impudent beggar jolly well right too! The poor autem-bawler might hang, drown, or shoot himself, for all her ladyship cared. It was easy to see Lady Forrester had only taken him up, partly to cure him of preaching against hunting, partly to amuse herself while in the country, partly to take the conceit out of, and give the Curate a lesson!"

But the County families, Aristocratic sportsmen, Lady Honoria and her select circle, thought the Curate vastly improved. He had been a sort of modern Dominie He had been a sort of modern Dominie Sampson, a kind of learned simpleton. He had been a perfect anchorite, a hermit, living in a cave, or cottage, "dull, unfriended, melancholy, slow;" a St. Simeon Stylites, on top of his column, rarely going into Society, and when there, looking like an undertaker, and acting like a kill-joy, a wet blanket. Now, under Lady Honoria's tutelage, he was fast becoming an accomplished man of the world. He could say

good things, and uttered them in a naïve way, that enhanced their merit. He was way, that enhanced their merit. He was voted positively an acquisition to Society in the country, during winter. Just enough of the Parson about him, to throw a gentle restraint over the faster spirits, without being a serious drawback on hilarity. The Curate seemed in a fair way to be popular. He was likely to make influential friends who could help him to Church preferment, if he remained a preacher, or if (as appeared probable) he embraced some other profession. or the remained a preacher, or if (as appeared probable) he embraced some other profession. Already, Society had begun to speculate on his quitting the ministry, to which all who are admitted, must profess a Divine call! A thing continually done! And perhaps it is better for clergymen, who mistake their profession, to abandon it finally, rather than to receive the pay and social emoluments of Priests, while neglecting duty, and devoting themselves to secular avocations! The Curate was to be sure a little "week" Curate was to be sure, a little "weak," regarding Lady Honoria Forrester. But he would never be so weak, as to follow her ladyship to London. Or if he did, a Season there, would effectually open his eyes, and dissipate his illusions. Either, he would meet Lady Honoria in London Society, or he would not! In either case, he would soon learn the folly of entertaining serious pretensions, towards a fashionable (though portionless) titled beauty, who might select a Duke from among her admirers; were she

not already engaged to her cousin, the future Earl of Laxington."

It will be seen that the Curate was not in that perilous state, specified by the Sacred Writer:—"Woe unto thee, when all men speak well of thee." But detractors and eulogists all agreed on one point: That there was a very great change in the Curate. Of this, there could be no doubt. A change in his opinions, habits, views, dress, address, appearance. His admirers even declared he was several inches taller. This might be accounted for, by the Curate wearing high heeled boots, and by his holding his head up, and looking like a man. Whereas, formerly, he had walked with his head hanging down, and gaze rivetted on the ground, looking like a very poor insignificant creature—"only a philosopher." Lady Honoria's prophetic words were accomplished. The Curate, having once broken through the ice, did not remain satisfied with merely attending at covert-side. He actually followed the hounds on a magnificent thoroughbred, lent him by the Earl, or by Lady Honoria, who always had her own way. The Curate rode well, and fearlessly, and never came to grief once. Great was the astonishment, and it must be confessed the secret disgust, of hunting "swells," some of was several inches taller. This might be secret disgust, of hunting "swells," some of whom had betted freely that he would break his neck. Lady Honoria was quite proud of her achievement. From a worldly and

Society point of view, she had every reason to boast of her latest acquisition. She had spoilt a good Curate, and made a good Foxhunter!

The Curate was completely metamorphosed, as to his outer man. He did not now appear in a threadbare suit of black, with inked seams. He shone forth in all the glory of new habiliments, made by a first-class West-End tailor. The Curate had never been really deficient in ready wit. Hitherto amiability and Christian charity had made him suppress sharp answers. Now he could hold his own, and give and take in company. Those who once exposed themselves to his repartee, were careful not to do so again. Fashionable "swells" who thought it "the correct thing" to "queer" the parson, were severely "sat upon," and found themselves, in their own elegant slang, "spifflicated," and "wiped down handsome!"

How about the Curate's preaching? There was a change there also. He had joined the ranks of Clerical Fox-hunters (an institution peculiar to the Church of England). He, of course, left off preaching against Field sports. A London publishing firm had offered him good terms for a series of Sermons, or Lectures against Hunting. Before dining at Laxington House, the Curate would have closed with this proposal. Now, he sent a civil note declining the offer. But there was also a considerable change otherwise, in the Curate's

preaching. It became very unequal. Formerly, he had composed his discourses very carefully. Now, he generally preached extempore, or "conveyed" his material, from standard old divines. He was either not afraid of, or indifferent to, being discovered a plagiarist. Sometimes he was shrewdly suspected of borrowing a lithographed sermon from the Rector. Once he was driven to borrow a sermon from a brother Cleric. The sermon was willingly lent; but its author warned its recipient, that the MS. was written, not exactly in shorthand, but in a peculiar kind of cipher, almost as illegible as hieroglyphics, to a stranger. The Curate managed to read a few paragraphs privately, during the hymn. He began to read aloud, making his elocution elaborately emphatic, and slow. Many of the words were denoted by figures, or diagrams. Their meanings the Curate managed to hit more or less correctly, or to substitute corresponding words, or to stumble over somehow. He got through, as he did a stiff bullfinch which he could not get over. But some obstacles cannot be surmounted in a hunting-field, or borrowed sermon. Towards the close, the Curate came suddenly on one unlucky emblem. It puzzled him, and doubtless his congregation also, when he delivered in a tone of real (not feigned) despair, the following extraordinary sentence: "There is nothing but trouble, disappointment, sorrow, vexation, and tribulation, in this—great round O!"

One reading previous to delivery, would have enabled him to discover the word signified to be—" World." The Curate's fashionable friends did not allow him to forget this "great round O" in a hurry.

On another occasion, he was preaching extempore. Not having previously thought out his subject, or fortified his memory by notes, he suddenly found himself completely at a loss, for what to say. He took refuge in the following expedient. The old-fashioned church contained a gallery, a portion of which extended behind the pulpit. Addressing the congregation in front, the Curate said: "My brethren, you will, I am sure, excuse me, if I recapitulate a portion of my discourse for the benefit of those in the gallery behind, who have heard me imperfectly." Then turning round, he went over his arguments, until he had recovered the thread of his ideas. He then faced the bulk of the congregation, and completed his sermon. On another occasion, he was driven to a still greater extremity, which obliged him to take refuge in a deception, the morality of which may puzzle casuists. He had written his MS., numbered his pages, and then stitched the sheets together. But his mind being preoccupied by Lady Honoria, the leaves of the sermon were fastened together in disorder, and not in regular sequence The mistake was not discovered, until the Curate had got some way through his discourse. Suddenly he found himself brought up, and utterly unable to proceed. He got over the difficulty this time, by feigning indisposition. His head drooped. He leaned heavily on the pulpit cushion, moaned, and murmured: "Take me down." The churchwardens and clerk assisted him out of the pulpit, and into the vestry. Here, the MS. was soon put to rights. It was announced that the reverend gentleman was now sufficiently recovered. The Curate reappeared, and concluded his sermon, amid the profound sympathy of the congregation.

These pulpit incidents shew how much the Curate had changed. Time was, and not so very long ago, when Mr. Weatherall would have been morally incapable of such pitiful evasions. There was another very remarkable and significant change in the Curate's preaching, upon which his flock was diametrically divided. Previously, in his steady-going days, the Curate had never touched upon the tender passion, either in, or out of the pulpit, except in the most cursory and incidental manner. He had indeed seemed as totally averse to the theme as if vowed to celibacy. He might have taken to himself the reproach from which Emerson tries to excuse himself in his Essay on "Love." "I have been told that my philosophy is unsocial, and that in public discourses, my reverence for the intellect, makes me unjustly cold to the personal relations." But since

going into Society, involving that remarkable tide in his affairs, the Curate frequently introduced Love into his sermons. Sometimes he took his text from "The Song of Solomon," and seemed to vie with the sacred writer, in the strong figurative language in which Love is described. Young ladies, and many married ladies, very much admired this style of preaching; summing up their approval by the feminine shibboleth, "How nice!" Not so with Miss Straitlace, and other single ladies of a certain age. The Curate once observed: "Love is no fickle, frivolous, sentiment. It is the strongest of all passions implanted in us, for the wisest of purposes, by Infinite Wisdom. On Love, depend the existence and welfare of the whole human race. Man is a brute and a cannibal, without civilisation. Civilisation rests on Society. Society depends on the Family. The Family depends on Marriage. And Marriage on Love. Thus, the whole edifice of human civilisation rests on Love. Love precedes all. It is essential to perpetuate the species. It is no less essential to develope each individual. The man or woman incapable of Love is an undeveloped, imperfect, and selfish being."

These sentiments, and others to the same purpose, were denounced by Miss Straitlace, as nonsensical, impious, profane, disgusting, and obscene! She declared that if the Curate preached any

more such sermons, she would be unable to "sit under him" any longer.

The Curate had been most regular in visit-

ing the poor. Some gushing young ladies had compared him to an angel! Latterly, his visits were like those of angels, few and far between. Nevertheless, though remiss, he did not altogether neglect his parochial duties. He had to reckon with public opinion, and with the Rector. Mr. Headlong perceived a divided duty. He was pleased with his Curate, for retracing his steps, and remodelling his very decided views on Field Sports, in accordance with the Rector's line of duty and advice. He was pleased with his Curate for growing more fashionable, and becoming a man of the world. While Mr. Weatherall was "unco guid," the Rector was half afraid of his saint-like Curate, as reflecting indirectly on his, (the Rector's) compromise with the world. But the Rector was not at all well pleased, when the Curate began to neglect his parochial duties. The Rector remonstrated with the Curate. The Curate replied that he could not, and would not, any longer perform all the hard work of the parish, shuffled off upon him, while the Rector kept up his dignity, and avoided the Poor. That if he (the Curate) were expected to do the lion's share of work, or, more correctly, the whole of the parochial duty, he should expect at least one-third of the income, which the Rector pocketed for doing little or nothing! The

Curate declined to slave himself into a consumption, for a bare pittance. He would not work harder than he was now doing, unless his salary were doubled.

Such plain speaking naturally disgusted the Rector. He seriously meditated dismissing his Curate, but thought better of it, after consulting with his wife. The Rectoress, indeed, peremptorily forbade the Rector to dismiss the Curate. She represented the folly of quarrelling with Mr. Weatherall, now a favourite at Laxington House, and thereby offending Lady Honoria, whose influence over the Earl was absolute. Mrs. Headlong, doubtless, advised her husband for his own good. Yet she had a private personal motive. As a woman of good family, the Rector's wife was somewhat jealous of Lady Honoria's social superiority, and would have secretly rejoiced to see her ladyship compromised with the Curate. The Rector and Curate, therefore, patched up a hollow truce, and did not wash their dirty linen in public.

The Curate had now got into tradesmen's books. This he would have found difficult, if not impossible, while not in Society. Going into Society, resulted in the questionable advantage of getting into debt. Now that he dined once a week, if not oftener, at Laxington House, and was seen riding to covert with the Earl, and Lady Honoria, obsequious tradesmen vied for the honour of the Curate's custom. He enjoyed the privilege of having

articles booked to him, for twice or thrice the ready-money price! I cannot, as a faithful historian, disguise the melancholy fact, that just in proportion as the Curate advanced in Good Society, so did his moral character deteriorate. Once, he had a salutary horror of getting into debt. He would have scorned to owe any man a shilling. Now, the Reverend "Alnaschar," dazzled by the blaze of good fortune, and the brilliant prospect of the future, thought nothing of letting his creditors wait. He had not the slightest intention of acting a dishonourable part. He fully intended to pay, when he got his preferment. At present he illustrated the spirit of the old song:

"And when rescally tailors came to be paid,

"And when rascally tailors came to be paid, 'Time enough for that', cried I."

His visions of preferment were vague and various. He was not decided whether to stick to his profession, and become a dignitary, or "cut the Church altogether," as some of his fast fashionable friends advised. He took to reading fashionable novels, especially those to reading fashionable novels, especially those in which the manners of the great, are so faithfully depicted! He thus studied personally and indirectly the customs of good society, to qualify him for his ambitious career. He anticipated the time when he should be presented at Court, his left hand cautiously manipulating his dress sword, so as to hinder it from getting between his legs, and upsetting him; his right arm supporting his lovely Patrician bride. The Curate was not suffi ciently acquainted with Court-etiquette to know, that Her Majesty receives ladies and gentlemen, not together, but respectively, at the totally different functions of *Levées* and Drawing-rooms.

Drawing-rooms.

The simpler a man is, the greater ass does he become, when he sets up for a man of the world. When a good man does go wrong, he goes very far wrong. This most striking case goes very far wrong. This most striking case of spoilt Curate was exhibited by Rev. Mr. Weatherall, to the great delight of wicked wags, scions of County families, and others, who thought their own pretensions to Lady Honoria's favour, far preferable to those of a "stuck-up," conceited, clerical nobody. Nevertheless, as the winter wore on, rumour asserted that the Curate capped his folly, by aspiring to Lady Honoria's hand. Some even said that he had a fair chance, as it was notorious that her ladyship could care nothing for that brutal, vulgar jockey, her cousin. That a union between such near relatives was bad in itself, and would be in this case (if it ever took place) only a marriage of con-venience. It was even reported that Lady Honoria and the Curate, had arrived at a mutual understanding, and were already engaged; but kept it secret, to deceive the Earl

One person believed she could open the Curate's eyes, had it been her interest to do so. Miss Minckes was satisfied that she saw through the whole scheme, far more clearly

than Lady Honoria herself. Miss Minckes did not love Lady Honoria, but bitterly hated the Curate. He (it will be remembered) had shown himself callous to all Miss Minckes's overtures, either from brutal insensibility, or because he did not see his way to marry on £150 per annum. Miss Minckes did not believe in broken hearts. She hoped Lady Honoria would make the Curate suffer, and let him experience the pangs of unrequited love!

As usual, his Mother was the last to hear the town talk about her son. But even maternal blindness could not altogether ignore accomplished facts. Gradually, the old lady's eyes were opened to the change in her darling son. At first, she was by no means disposed to look on the gloomy side. She was pleased to see her son William "respectit like the lave." She liked him to "respectit like the lave." She liked him to dine at the grand house. Such entertainments brightened up both son and mother. For "William" had much to say about Laxington House, and its occupants. He described the spacious rooms, the gorgeous furniture, the pictures, and other curiosities; the well-drilled and respectful servants; but above all, the grand company and their conversation; the ladies, their exquisite refinement and their beauty, enhanced by their splendid toilets. The worthy old lady never wearied of such descriptions. She seemed to be enjoying all the dissipation of good society,

at second hand. But what fairly "staggered" the good lady, was to learn the total alteration of her son's principles, from a pulpit denouncer of Field-sports, to a regular assistant at fox-hunting.

This astounding intelligence came upon her like a thunder-clap, and was, in fact, communicated by no less a personage than the Rectoress. That lady felt it her duty, to let Mrs. Weatherall know the facts, about her The communication was made most abruptly, without any previous preparation. The Rector's wife took care to add that it was entirely owing to her intercession, that the Rector did not dismiss "the Wild Curate." Having thus satisfactorily executed her charitable errand, and very nearly thrown poor Mrs. Weatherall into a fit, the proud, portly dame took a patronising farewell of her victim, and sailed out of the humble cottage, leaving dismay, apprehension, anguish, behind As the Rectoress pranced along the High Street, her countenance fairly beamed with delight, at the consciousness of having done her duty. A similar sense of "Duty" doubtless actuated Wellington when, having obtained the surrender of Paris, by promising security to all its inhabitants, he basely allowed Labedeyere and Ney to be shot!

The Curate could not clear himself in his mother's eyes. In vain he pretended that to hunt once a week, was necessary for his

health. His mother knew that he had injured his health, by working and studying too hard. But now, her strict sense of propriety told her, he was erring in the other extreme. Relaxation was all very well. That could be had by horse exercise, either along roads, or cross-country riding, without hunting. Apparently, the Curate thought it necessary to his health, to ride to covert side, along with Lady Honoria, to keep as near as possible, while hounds were running, and to accompany her back to Laxington. The Mother thought these frequent interviews good, neither for her son's bodily, nor mental health. The Curate thought the day lost, in which he did not see Lady Honoria. He seemed able to think or talk of no one else. He even murmured her name in his dreams.

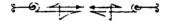
Once Mrs. Weatherall entered her son's study, where he had been occupied for hours. She saw no vestige of a sermon, but the table was littered over with sheets of paper containing verses, in all stages of progress, from first drafts to fair copies; but all alike, addressed to "Honoria." With anguish, Mrs. Weatherall perceived that she had no longer the first place, in her son's heart. She began at last to doubt whether she had any place there at all. As a rational woman, she had reconciled herself to her son falling in love, and marrying some day. But she hoped and expected that such a change in his condition, would not rob her of his darling society.

That he would marry some gentle, worthy, retiring, domestic woman, in character like himself, and settle near his mother. Possibly they might all three keep house together. Then she would have two children.

Now, this beautiful day-dream seemed never likely to become a reality. That her quiet, steady, studious "William," of all men, should have fallen in love with a woman, the direct opposite of the ideal his Mother would have selected; with a proud imperious, aristocratic beauty—a spoilt child—better fitted to be a Princess, or Empress, Queen, or Duchess, than a poor Curate's wife. How terrible! Mrs. Weatherall began to reflect, if it were possible still to save her son from the doom awaiting him. Either the disappointment consequent on the shattering of his hopes, a disappointment which might destroy life or reason! Or the fulfilment of them, which might cause his moral ruin. For the Mother saw plainly, that Lady Honoria must undergo great, incredible, almost miraculous changes, before she could become fitted to enjoy a life of domestic happiness, as a parson's wife.

A foolish mother would have wept, sulked, and scolded her son, and thus confirmed him in his infatuation. Mrs. Weatherall saw the necessity of proceeding in another way. She reflected long, and looked at the difficulty from all points of view, always excepting those from which her son regarded it. And

at last, she determined on her line of action. But before taking the decisive step she meditated, the mother resolved to talk to "William." Perhaps he might be amenable to reason. Mrs. Weatherall had plenty of sound common sense;—was rather a long-headed woman. But she shared in that popular delusion, that a person might be reasoned out of love! I shall believe in such a possibility when it is fully proved that patients have been reasoned out of fevers, consumptions, and various epidemics!



CHAPTER VI.

A MOTHER ATTEMPTS TO REASON HER SON OUT OF LOVE!

"I can't help it mother. If you were to talk to me for an hour longer, I can only come back to this—I love Lady Honoria!"

"My son, I know you do."

- "Is there anything wrong in loving a beautiful, agreeable, accomplished woman? She was made to be loved, to inspire affection."
 - "I know all that."
- "It's easy to say you know, in that cold, unconcerned way. You don't know Lady Honoria. I do."

"I have seen her in Church, and in the street. She is certainly very beautiful, gracious, and aristocratic looking——"

"Mother, you will drive me mad, if you go on talking about Lady Honoria, like a picture, a statue, a china vase. You've seen her in Church, and in the street! But you don't know her. You never saw her in company, all life and animation; nor in the hunting field, with the roses of health in her cheeks. You never spoke to her, or heard her speak. You were never near enough to note the clear lambent light in her eyes—her amber-coloured eyes, like a hawk's—yet these eyes can look

gentle too. You never heard her sing. Oh! as Othello said of Desdemona, 'She will sing the savageness out of a bear!'"

"William, she has bewitched you, and

others."

- "Oh! I can guess what you are going to say—that she is a flirt and a coquette. I don't believe it—but suppose she were so—what then?"
 - "What then!"
- "Yes, what then? She is like other women—far from perfect. But, with all her imperfections, I like her infinitely better than those paragons, those falsely called good and religious people."

"My dear son, I hoped you would have fixed your affections on a very different sort

of woman."

"Of course! I know exactly the sort of woman you, and Mrs. Headlong, would select for a curate's wife. A prim, modest-looking creature; a woman with two ideas in her head, who never misses prayers, and swallows every word the parson says, as if it were Gospel A woman between a servant, and a nursery governess."

"My dear William, how you talk! Have

you forgotten you are a clergyman?"
"No indeed! I remember it to my cost."

"What do you mean?"

"That I'm tired of being talked at, like a schoolboy, drilled, and instructed by the Rector's wife, and by my own female parishioners; told I had better do this, and not do that, and so forth. I know you mean well, mother. But it's the last straw that breaks the camel's back. On one point, I will not surrender my liberty—the natural right of all free men—and of all pairing animals, to select a mate! I know your good, pious, matchmaking women. They think a clergyman can show them the only way to heaven—aye, and even save their souls! I heard an Evangelical say so in the pulpit.* And yet they think clergymen cannot be trusted to select their own wives! There's Mrs. Headlong, a thorough match-maker, has joined people who would otherwise, never have thought of one another. They are miserable. Yet they say, marriages are made in heaven, and the Rector preaches that God marries them!"

"But what has all this to do with you?"

"Why, I can guess that Mrs. Headlong has fixed on some decent young person, to be my wife. Perhaps you have, also. And you expect me to marry her, and then send round the hat, like other clerical cadgers. The polite term is testimonial. It's charity all the same! Because I have chosen for myself, I am to be lectured, advised, and mourned over, as if I had committed a mortal sin!"

"But, my dear son, consider the difference in social rank, between an Earl's daughter, and yourself."

^{*} Fact! I heard an Evangelical minister in the pulpit say:—"We (clergy) are sent to save your souls!"

"I have! When for this very reason, I hesitated to dine at Laxington House, you yourself said that I, as a preacher of the Gospel, and an ordained minister of Christ, was quite fit to associate with the Earl."

"I did. I say so still."

"Well, then, I am fit to be his son-in-law;

"I grant even that. But is Lady Honoria fit to be a poor curate's wife? Bred up in luxury and affluence, with every prospect of marrying one of her own rank; is it reasonable to expect her ladyship to be satisfied with such a comparatively humble station? Is it honourable in you to ask her?"
"Mother! Amor vincit omnia.

conquers all things. I am a poor curate, now, one of the *inferior* clergy. Obliged to obey the Rector, whom I heartily despise But I shall not always be a poor Curate. Love has awakened my ambition—taught me my latent strength. With Honoria's love, I can conquer the world. If I remain in the Church, I may be a bishop. Or, 1 may distinguish myself, win fame, and fortune, in some secular career."

"Oh, what delusions!"

"Perhaps not. I am considered a good preacher. And putting aside personal qualifications, consider the Earl's influence. Headlong would dismiss me to-morrow, if he dared. He fears offending Lady Honoria. She can do anything with her father."

"And with you too, I fear. Her ladyship

seems to have general influence. Mrs. Headlong told me as much. But why should the

Rector desire to dismiss you?"

"Because I know him too well. Because I told him roundly the other day, that I would no longer work like a slave, for a gardener's wages. That, for the future, I would do my stipulated duty, and no more."

"I don't blame you for that. I think the

Rector was inclined to impose upon you."

"And I know that he actually has imposed on me, for three years, and would continue to do so, if I had not kicked——"

"Kicked! Gracious! do you mean you

actually fought together?"

"No, my dear simple mother. Kicked is a mere metaphor, to signify that I resisted further imposition. Have you not often told me I was killing myself?"

"I have, indeed!"

"Well, my eyes are opened at last. I am not now doing all the parish duty for a slave driver, who would have worked me into my grave, and then hired another slave."

"Your language is strong—unclerical. But

I think you are quite right, my son."

"And whom have you to thank for it? The woman whom you think a flirt—a coquette—has taught me to know my real worth. You think my love for Lady Honoria is blindness. Why, she has made me a man of the world. Here is a proof. In point of rank, Lady Honoria is far above me, but not

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in fortune. Rumour says, the Earl's affairs are involved, his estate mortgaged; that he cannot give his daughter anything, and that, consequently, he intends to marry her to her cousin, the Honourable Mr. Forrester, heir to the title and estate."

"What a nice arrangement, if she can love him."

"If! But she cannot. No wonder, if what I hear of him is true, he is not the man to

inspire love, in a pure woman."

"But, William, there is often less freedom of matrimonial choice, among ladies of high rank, than among poor and middle-class people. It is very natural for the Earl to wish to provide for his daughter, by a marriage which makes her mistress of her father's estate——"

"Yes, very natural, but not very moral, to sell his daughter in marriage, to a man reputed to be bad-tempered, dissolute, idle, without ambition, worthless, and, moreover, her first cousin! For in such a marriage, all the infirmities, mental and physical, of both parents, are morally certain to be intensified in their unhappy children, if they have any! You have often heard me say, first cousins should never intermarry."

"I have indeed, and what you say, seems very reasonable. But at any rate, they are not within the prohibited degrees in the Prayer Book. And her father's wishes, and the estate, which must otherwise be lost to Lady Forrester——"

"My dear mother, I never expected to hear you advocate mercenary marriage!"

"William, how can you say such a thing?"

"If her cousin's character be but half as bad as eported——"

"But reports are not trustworthy. Never

believe half you hear-"

"Attend to my hypothesis. I said If! Women never stick to the point. If Mr. Forrester is a bad, base, dishonourable, immoral man, would you recommend Lady Honoria marrying him, merely to get the title and estate?"

"Certainly not, but-"

"I am glad to hear you say that. I know she does not love him."

"Well, William, grant she should not, and does not marry her cousin; still Lady Forrester may make a much better match, from a worldly point of view."

"She may. She might marry a Duke. No man has a right to expect sixpence, with such a woman. To use a hackneyed phrase, she

is a fortune in herself."

"And well able to spend a fortune! Lady

Forrester is no wife for a poor man."

"Meaning me. But I shall not always be poor. With her love, I could do anything. All I say is, Lady Honoria has a right to please herself, and not make a base, mercenary match, under cover of the hollow, false, worldly pretence of duty to the world, to Society, to her father, and to herself! I am sick of that cant.

Women are sold in England, not quite so openly, and honestly; but as effectually, as in the slave market at Constantinople."

"Oh, William!"

- "You may well say 'Oh!' Do you lament the fact, or only my unconventional statement of it? I tell you, in the last two months, I have learned enough of the baseness of Society, to write a novel."
 - "Clergymen should not write novels."

"Why not?"

"They should have other things to attend to."

- "I don't see how Kingsley could have spent time better, than in writing 'Alton Locke' and 'Yeast.' People are more interested in novels, than in sermons. If a clergyman has a message to deliver to the world, why not put it in the most popular form?"
- "I cannot pretend to reason with you, William. I fear you are not as strict as you were. You will be going to theatres next."
- "And why not, mother? Persons who run a muck against the theatre, and call it the Devil's house, are either awful fools, or awful hypocrites. We parsons should rather try to purify the Stage and enlist it in the service of Morality and Religion. Shakespeare was a play-writer, and a play-actor. Was he not a better Christian, than nine-tenths of the lay and clerical hypocrites, who take that name in vain to deceive the world, and gather gold? Would you make a present of that mighty genius, to atheists and infidels?"

"William, you are too clever for me."

"Well, mother, I am determined not to be a poor hide-bound hypocrite, or mummy. A clergyman may be a man. I am resolved to assert my manhood, and freedom, as a clergyman, if possible: if not, in some other profession."

- "Would you abandon your calling?"
 "Yes; if it stands in the way of my
 marrying the woman I love. Absurd to say marriages are made in heaven; and compel young people to sacrifice their first best inclinations, in obedience to the false, base hackneyed wisdom of the world! May not this strong, pure passion be sent to guide me through the pitfalls, snares, and temptations of life? 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. I love Lady Honoria Forrester. I intend to win her—to carry her off from all rivals, if I can. At least, mother, you know my attachment is disinterested. She has no fortune. Her rank places no invincible obstacles between us. It is she herself, Honoria Forrester, whom I love. She is the only woman I ever loved, or ever shall love. She has awakened my whole nature. Before meeting her, I knew not that I could love. Since, I have learned to understand St. Augustine's Confession: 'Nondum amabam, et amare amabam; quærebam quîd amarem, amans amare."
 - "At least, speak English—not Greek!"
 - "Mother! if you cannot sympathise with

me, at least do not tell me to stand aside, and see the prize won by another, while any hope remains to me."

"My son, I see you are terribly in earnest."

"I am, indeed, mother. I have a will of my own. I shall put forth the latent restrained energies of years, in all their concentrated force. I may be—I must be successful.

"Ah! my son, if you should fail."

- "Then, I will pray for help. I shall need it. But I will not anticipate failure. Sufficient to the day, is the evil thereof."
- "My dear son, I am glad to hear you say you will pray for help. You will, indeed, need help. I would comfort you if I could. But I cannot deceive you, with hopes I do not share."
- "At least, do not be unsympathetic. Do not dash my dearest earthly hopes. Mother, I have tried to be a good son, have I not?"
 - "You have."
 - "Until now, I never disobeyed you?"
 - " Never!"
- "Think, then, dear mother, what is the strength of that passion, which makes me now appear to act a rebellious part to you, to whom I owe everything, under God! Believe me, I do not wish to pain you."

"I know that, my son."

"But you know not, you cannot know, how I love that dearest of women. Oh! Mother, pity me—help me if you can. You are

attempting the impossible—to reason me out of love! You advise me to cease loving the most amiable of women—just as you might advise me not to treat myself to a valuable book, or some other purchase, beyond my income! Do you not see that if I could take your advice—could cease loving her at your request, that it would not deserve the name of love!—but only vanity, ostentation, pride, or that 'tepid preference' which commonplace people feel for one another. Honoria is part of my being. She enters into all my thoughts, and pursuits. I cannot live without her. That day is lost in which I do not see her. I—I——"

Here the poor fellow fairly broke down, and burst into a fit of hysterical weeping. His Mother gathered him to her heart. There, with his head on his mother's bosom, sobbed the grown man, where he had sobbed in childish sorrow. Mother and son mingled their tears. The Curate felt relieved by his confession. And (strange, or not, as it may appear,) his mother forgot all her wise "saws," and worldly wisdom, to soothe and comfort him, as she had done before. She muttered incoherent, inconsistent promises. She did not know. Perhaps it might be all for the best. If he felt it so deeply, possibly Lady Honoria did also. His mother would watch, and pray for him, and not say anything more against his love, &c., &c.

Does any reader think this scene unnatural

—the Curate's conduct unclerical, foolish, unfilial? His conduct was natural. I will explain. The Curate was under the influence of a first passion, for a very beautiful woman. In six weeks, he had crystallized her all over, with every imaginable perfection. But what do I mean by crystallization? Throw into the unworked depths of a salt-mine, a leafless branch. In two or three months, take it out, covered with brilliant crystals, which envelope the tiniest tendril. The original branch is no longer recognisable. This crystallization typifies the moral process of Love, by which the loved being is so thoroughly adorned with every imaginable perfection, that the original character can no longer be perceived. This Grand Passion was the sudden rebound from an artificial position.

And there were, in the Curate's case, peculiar circumstances which will (to all competent judges of human nature) fully account for his otherwise extraordinary self-assertion, and determination to take his own course! The Curate was pure, as a modest girl. He had never been dissipated. He had never gone through that process known as "sowing wild oats," which (whether necessary or not) ninety-nine men in a hundred, do go through. What is offered to his pure bride, by the ordinary husband of thirty? He calls it Love. It is certainly not first love! Fidelity, he may offer, but not the strong,

genuine passion of first fervent Love—that which he fondly hopes to receive from his wife! Some men might offer Love at twenty-one, or perhaps at twenty-five. Ten or fifteen years later, their passions have been sated, blunted, and their constitutions more or less impaired. Men of the world, are utterly blasés, like Sir Charles Coldstream, in Used Up—so many extinct volcanoes, before they select their wives. Who was the joker who said, "A reformed rake makes the best husband?"

In this important respect, the Curate was a complete exception to the general rule. He had never loved before; never lost the virgin freshness of his heart, or the modesty of his nature. He had never gained that sad experience, which enabled Byron to write:—

"No more—no more—oh! never more on me, The freshness of the heart can fall like dew."

The Curate had never dulled, weakened, or impaired his spiritual, moral, mental, and physical health, by any of those baleful intrigues, which exhaust the energies of the vast majority of men, from twenty to thirty; and of many, to a much later period. He was in his twenty-sixth year. His passions had remained unmoved, and therefore restrained by his religious education, and convictions. Till within the last two months, he had been considered an ascetic. He was known to hold very strict ideas, as to clerical celibacy. Before his introduction to Lady Honoria, he

might almost have been tempted to take a vow against marriage. In the Church Council which decreed clerical celibacy, the majority were chiefly the younger men! The Curate had the same over-weening confidence in his own strength. The statue remains latent in the uncut marble of the mine, till called forth, by the genius of the sculptor. So did his passions slumber, in the unstirred depths of his soul. A fair woman looked on him, spoke graciously to him, flattered him, and set them all aglow. Possibly, Lady Honoria was not nearly so unfeeling, as she seemed. It is truly said: "Women are not songoing of helf their acquestry." Hebit is conscious of half their coquetry." Habit is second nature. Lady Honoria could not possibly divine all the effect of her caressing manner, and gentle words. For she had never before met a man, at once so unsophisticated, so pure, yet so susceptible, as Mr. Weatherall.

Men of the world (like Lord Oddfish, Captain Rasper, and many more) could not resist Lady Honoria's witchery. They could not tell when her ladyship was merely flattering their foibles, or speaking from her heart! It was then utterly impossible for the Curate, to distinguish between her jest or earnest; and to resist the seductive sweetness of her high-born manner, when she chose to please. Even her caprice heightened her charm. The Curate surrendered at once. He might have escaped, had he only looked on her at a dis-

tance. Once within the spell of her manner, voice, conversation, and attractions; it was a hopeless case. Like the fascinated bird, the Curate ceased to struggle. He did not wish to escape! Enobarbus said of Cleopatra, at forty:—

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale Her infinite variety."

Lady Honoria was not twenty! Thackeray observes: "A woman without an actual hump, may marry any man." All men are poor, helpless creatures, exposed to the machinations of wily women. What chance had Mr. Weatherall against the magical influence of this imperious beauty? None whatever! I have now accounted for the Curate succumbing at once, without a conscious effort, and falling in love with Lady Honoria. That is natural enough. But why should a man hitherto so humble, become all at once, so rebellious, as to kick against his ecclesiastical superior, and the petticoat government of Mrs. Headlong, his Mother, and all his female parishioners? This also was perfectly natural, and attributable to the same cause—the concentrated and irresistible energy, of a pure man's whole nature, awakened by First Love! So that, paradoxical though it may appear, Love was at once the cause of the Curate's weakness, and strength!

Hitherto Mr. Weatherall had seemed the

meekest of men—a perfect example of the model-curate genus. Marriageable young ladies had sighed for him, and almost echoed Juliet's extravagant wish for Romeo, that he might be cut out in little stars! Two sisters had courted the Curate—cast sheep's eyes at him, even in the reading-desk and pulpit. They did not both intend to marry him. At least, not until the Deceased Wife's Sister's least, not until the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill should have caused the requisite relaxations in our marriage laws. The sisters, hunting in couples, would have first caught their Curate. Then, they would probably have cast lots for him, since they could not divide him. Women only laughed at the Curate's known preference for celibacy. They knew perfectly well, that his prejudices on that score, so far from hindering him from marrying, would only render him an easier prey to the woman, who should determine to marry him. They could point to many examples of High Church Curates, who many examples of High Church Curates, who thought to warn off women, by declaring in favour of clerical celibacy. Yet, one and all, had been carried in matrimonial triumph. Men of the world, even flirting Curates, might have made some resistance. Clerical celibacy Curates could make none. They were, like Julia, powerless:

"And whispering 'I will ne'er consent'-consented."

No one supposed the Curate could have a will of his own, in disposing of himself in

marriage. In this respect, he would resemble the "judicious Hooker," who certainly, as regards his unfortunate marriage, merits rather the title of the *injudicious* Hooker! This was so far true, that had the Curate never been introduced to Lady Honoria, he would probably, some day, have been manœuvred into marriage. He would have gone, like a lamb to the altar, and married a wife selected for him by the Rectoress, or his mother, or other ladies, under the conviction, duly drilled into him, that no one else could make him happy. And he might have calmly rocked the cradle, as the "judicious Hooker" did, at his wife's command!

Love, however, which blinded him to all imperfections in Lady Honoria, opened his eyes in all other respects. He looked back on his past lite, as a mistake—one huge blunder. He had lived in unnatural restraint. Love was a joy of which he had not dreamed. He had been deceived, hoodwinked, and restrained, too long. He would arise, shake himself, and burst his bonds, like Samson, and show the world how much he had been misunderstood. Hitherto, he had allowed his Rector to patronise, and impose upon him, though the Curate at five-and-twenty, knew much more than the Rector at sixty! I refer to Theology. The Rector would have made a good veterinary surgeon! Mr. Weatherall had lived up to the character of the model

popular Curate, before the latter had begun to assert himself, snub his bishop, and set himself up above all authority! Our Curate would be "a tame cat" no longer. He would be free in the province of love, marriage, and everything else. He would act, speak, dress, look, think and talk, like a man of the world. Why should he sacrifice himself for his parishioners—a parcel of thankless people, who accepted his self-effacement, as a mere matter of course? The very same cause which maintained inviolate, his capacity for true, pure, genuine love, preserved in all their integrity a naturally strong will, and energies—mental, moral, and physical—unfrittered, and unwasted, by gallantry, and dissipation. The same cause made him at once slave, and conqueror, in Love; and a formidable rival to other men. They had inoculated themselves, and knew nothing of the disease, in all its intensity. It fairly mastered the Curate, but at the same time, invested him with a terribly magnetic force, which threatened to take captive his fair captivator!

The Curate's new resolutions soon took the form of actions. He determined to brave public opinion, in following the hounds. He did so, and justified himself. When rebuked, or called to account, he asked: "Why should not parsons hunt? If wrong, no Christian should hunt." When taxed with inconsistency, he reterted with a Tu

quoque. "Reform yourself first. I don't pretend to be the only consistent person in the world." He showed physical, as well as moral courage. Captain Tearaway and others, fops and swells, envied him Lady Honoria's favour. They coolly anticipated that he would come to grief in the hunting-field.

"If the dashed beggar broke his dashed neck, it would serve him jolly well right," said Squire Hawbuck, who, on the strength of his acres, thought he might aspire to the portionless daughter of an Earl. "The idea of a parson, a curate, sticking up to Lady Honoria, and huntin—Haw, haw!"

Two to one was freely offered, and taken, that the Curate would be off, at the first burst; that he would never live through the day; or go the pace. As to being in at the death, that was out of the question. If he could stick to the back of the Earl's splendid thoroughbred, it was more than was expected. Losers looked blank and swore. Winners laughed, complimented the Curate on his horsemanship, and said the parson was "a rare plucked one." And the Yankee gentleman, Cæsar Spry, Esquire, guessed "the cushion thumper was a wiry varmint, and had the clear grit in him, and no mistake, sir-r-ee—you bet!"

sir-r-ee—you bet!"

Lady Honoria was equally surprised, and pleased. The Curate's ready wit gave him great advantages in the drawing-room, over

such men as Squire Hawbuck, Captain Tearaway, and others. He was not a pedant, or bookworm. He could talk on current topics, hold his own, display learning and information. He was a pleasant companion. A superior kind of "tame cat." Lady Honoria thought she had seen the best of him, or all that was in him. His ready obedience pleased her. But she almost trembled, when she saw him, for the first time, mounted on Saladin, lest her whim might have a serious catastrophe. She was trying to break his heart. She did not wish to break his neck. Imagine her astonishment, when the Curate made no attempt to pull up Saladin, except to moderate his stride at his fences; rode side by side, and only permitted her to take the lead, and show the way, out of deference to a lady.

When the run was over, Lady Honoria said:—"You have hunted before to day, Mr.

Weatherall."

"Never—I assure your ladyship."

"Indeed! Then you are a born fox-hunter. You are quite an acquisition."

Dangerous words from Lady Honoria, to

one so susceptible!

The Curate liked to go to Laxington House. No wonder! Mr. Gnatstrainer and other enemies said he was a tuft-hunter, a toady, and a parasite. Independently of his nascent passion, everything there, was novel and interesting. The Curate liked the easy manners

of Society; the inexpressible charm of good breeding, the desire not to offend in trifles, the suave manner. He liked the society of ladies and gentlemen, so different from most of the persons he had previously met. learned to like the occasional evenings in the smoking-room, the social gossip over cigar and brandy-and-soda, varied by some of those extraordinarily named drinks, compounded by the American gentleman. The company were convulsed by Mr. Spry's droll Yankee stories, and manner of narration. The Curate laughed as heartily as any, while the Mr. Spry recommended his latest compound—"back-straightener," "corpse reviver," "moral-swasion," "bottomless-pit," or "sabbath-calm," &c., gravely adding: "A little don't hurt, as the Deacon says. It's the drinking between drinks, plays the mischief with this old hoss, I reckon."

END OF VOL. I.

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